METRO / A21
Armed men rob grocery store, bank in QC; 1 killed, 5 hurt

NEWS / A2
8 civilians killed in Jolo; enraged governor blames military elements

ACROSS / A18
Smuggled Cebu cars bore Manila license plates

ENTERTAINMENT / F5
Joyce dating someone old, 'but not too old'

JDV son says Mike A, Razon funded ouster

By John Liboy Inciong, Norman Bordadora and Cid C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S husband was the supposed "official" who orchestrated the ouster of Jose de Venecia Jr. as Speaker while the latter's friend, Transportation Secretary Arthur Yap, withheld money to members of the House of Representatives who wanted him, the former Speaker's son said yesterday.

As for the role of President Arroyo, Joey said she "allowed my father's ouster."

JDV, PAMILYA SA A3

German lawmakers meeting new Speaker

By Tarra Quismundo

ONLY A FEW MINUTES after a long-scheduled meeting between German lawmakers and their counterparts in the Philippine Congress ended yesterday afternoon, Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile was already meeting with his German counterpart.

GERMAN SEE A3

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, February 6, 2008 | 44 | 9 sections | Vol. 23 | No. 60 | P18 | www.inquirer.net

DAY AFTER THE HALLPASH CRACK As his residence in Forbes Park, Makati City, around Speaker Jose de Venecia is photographed smiling over the photo he is white talking on his mobile phone.

'It's history catching up with JDV'

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE OUSTER OF SPEAKER JOSE DE Venecia is poetic justice for Pulanyar Boy, Alta Ghosn Exhibit "Eskwela" Mikee.

On the floor of the House of Representatives on Monday, Mikee moved to declare the position of Speaker vacant, formally calling in motion the last in a series of events over the past weeks that brought on end to De Venecia's leadership of the House.

"It's history catching up with JDV," said Mikee when Gilbert, the late Speaker Ramon V. Mitra, would have framed. He the same day De Venecia was ousted after an unprecedented five hours in Speaker.

IT'S HISTORY SEE A3

DOUBLE THREAT As his residence in Executive Village, Makati City, Joey de Venecia says that his "father is now also a threat to the administration."

Gov't grabs ZTE witness

Ermita, Belmonte eyed if JDV loses Lakas presidency

By Lala B. Salamanca and Michael Lim Ubac

A SENIOR MALACAÑANG OFFICIAL yesterday said ousted Speaker Jose de Venecia may have impeded his position as Lakas-CMD president with his allegations of corruption in the Arroyo administration, amid warnings of a split in the ranks of the country's dominant party.

"That is totally eroded," Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said of De Venecia's position in the administration coalition. "I don't know if he can stay as president of Lakas ... If Lakas and Bangon will merge, I don't see any place for [him] there."

MERGER SEE A4

JDV: Ready to help Comelec investigate 2004 election fraud

By Norman Bordadora and Jerome Aning

FORMER SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA yesterday said he was prepared to cooperate in any investigation that may be conducted by the Commission on Elections on his allegations of electoral fraud committed by the administration in the 2004 presidential election.

De Venecia made the charge in an emotional address he delivered in

JDV SPEECH A4

Night of a hundred knives

By Antonio Chronicle

JOSE DE VENECIA, FIVE-TERM REPRESENTATIVE OF PANGASINAN, WAS ousted as Speaker of the House of Representatives in the most gruesome political assassination in Philippine legislative history.

Probably the longest-serving Speaker since the founding of the Philippine Assembly in 1907, De Venecia fell from the pinnacle of parliamentary power on Monday night, with 174 congressmen voting to dispose him. Only 35 voted against the change, and 16 abstained.

COMMENTARY

He conserved over De Venecia clubbed with more than a hundred letters, in a political butchery recalling the murderous

NIGHT SEE A4

HAND PAST BIGHS Davao Rep. Prospero Nograles takes his oath as the new Speaker of the House of Representatives, the first ever from Mindanao. Sharing center stage with him are erstwhile Bicolano (left), daughter Margarita Ignacio and son John Isa Jesus. Promising reforms, the transparency in the ouster of Speaker Nograles from Davao Oriental to power for 1,100 Arroyo-loyalist ones if the President's term runs to Congress built for three successive De Venecia.

Lozada met by airport officials, whisked off via tarmac

By Tarra Quismundo and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

A CRUCIAL WITNESS to the scandal-tainted National Broadband Network (NBN) deal between the Arroyo administration and China's ZTE Corp. was seized by airport officials as he returned to Manila yesterday, airport sources told the Inquirer.

An arresting team led by the office of the Senate Sergeant at Arms (SAA) were waiting inside the VIP Section of Terminal 1 when Romulo Neri arrived on Philippine Airlines flight PR 315 at 4:45 p.m.

Lozada, along with former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, is the subject of an arrest warrant issued by the Senate blue ribbon committee.

LOZADA SEE A4

GMA questions Meralco system loss charges

By Abigail L. Ito and Christine O. Avendaño

IN SEARCH OF THE ELUSIVE remedy to high power rates, President Macapagal-Arroyo has made her own recommendations, with the Lopez-led Manila Electric Co. likely to take the hit.

Speaking before hundreds of attendees of the Energy Summit yesterday, Ms. Arroyo issued several directives meant to reduce electricity rates for low-income power users and industrial consumers.

For one, Ms Arroyo ordered for the granting of discounts to the poor rather than recapping the value-added tax (VAT) on electricity to counter the effects of soaring oil prices.

The also questioned Meralco's billing of power, for changes in its customers. System loss refers to electricity lost due to pilferage and lost as it passes through transmission and distribution lines.

Ms. Arroyo also said she wanted to step up the implementation of open access, or the "ability to bargain the high cost of electricity and give industrial consumers the power of choice."

She instructed Trade Secretary Peter Favila to devote an

GMA SEE A4

Obama narrows Clinton lead; McCain goes for kill

WASHINGTON—Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton fought for bragging rights in a tightening Democratic contest, while Republican John McCain hoped to bury rival Mitt Romney's presidential hopes in voting from Alaska to the Atlantic on Super Tuesday, the biggest primary day in US history.

The vote to unleash a national primary. Each party is holding contests in more than 20 states, including some of the most populous, such as California and New York. At stake are about half the delegates who will choose a nominee at party conventions in August and September. (See infographics on Page A16.)

Clinton, the New York senator and wife of former President Bill Clinton, has long been seen as the inevitable Democratic candidate but she is in a dead-heat battle for the pole just weeks ago. Her supporters are expecting that she would lock up the nomination with big wins on Super Tuesday.

But Obama, a first-term US senator campaigning on a theme of hope and change, has narrowed Clinton's lead in latest surveys, and close with her

OBAMA SEE A14

CNN JARGONBUSTER

SUPERDELEGATE—Democratic officials who can vote for the candidate of their choice at the party convention, regardless of how their state's voters cast their ballots in the primaries or caucuses. Superdelegates include Democratic governors, members of Congress and party officials.

■ CAUCUS—A process during which members of a political party gather in their neighborhoods to choose their delegates to the party convention. Caucuses are run differently from state to state.

■ PRIMARY—A "primary election" is a vote cast by registered voters to choose their party's nominee for president in the general election.

Lent starts today; think ashes, stardust

By Ma. Ceres P. Doyo and Beverly T. Mendoza

FRIDAY BRINGS ASH WEDNESDAY, the beginning of the 40-day Lenten season, the Church reminds the faithful of their mortality and the need to make sacrifices.

LENT SEE A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2008

WEATHER FORECAST

Second
FRONTPAGE

EZ2 SIX DIGIT
25 31 7 7 4 6 6 2
SUPERLOTTO 6/45
7 5 6 1 4 9
6/42 LUZON/VIS-MIN
2 4 16 27 33 42
P9,410,401.80

8 civilians killed in Jolo clash

But Sulu governor is enraged, says it's a massacre

By Julie S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

JOLO, SULU—EIGHT CIVILIANS, INCLUDING three women and two children, were killed during a clash between troops and Muslim extremists in Maimbung town at dawn on Monday, the military said yesterday.

An all-day dump-and-run attack by the Abu Sayyaf left Ramadan Ismulan, 45, dead in the fighting.

The bodies of the eight civilians were found during clean-up operations after an earlier clash when three Abusaf soldiers and two soldiers were killed.

Sulu Gov. Abdusakur Tan, however, denied there was an encounter between the military and Abu Sayyaf leaders, saying what happened was a massacre.

"We cannot tolerate these acts. We are condemning in the strongest terms these cold-blooded killings by supposedly elite forces of the Armed Forces for killing innocent civilians," Tan said.

As far as we are concerned, troops cleared with the Abu Sayyaf and Ameerah Ismulan," he said.

Ismulan said the bodies of the eight civilians were found away from the site of the operations, supporting that they were killed in another location.

"It was a legitimate operation and we're trying to find out how these civilians died," he said.

Western Mindanao Command chief Lt. Gen. Hermen Arlaga immediately flew to Jolo to look into the incident.

"The investigating team will determine the facts and the truth. There will be no cover-up," Arlaga said.

Local officials said the civilians were killed during a pre-dawn mission by 10 armed navy commandos to rescue two hostages held by the Abu Sayyaf.

Citing eyewitness accounts, the officials said the commandos opened fire on civilians after being shot at as they entered the Abusaf compound in the village of Kan Jaya of Ismulan's relatives, Ramadan Ismulan, Hadji Ismulan, Jamal Ismulan and Nur Ajan, the pregnant woman.

The five still-unidentified relatives of Abu Sayyaf whom one of the victims brought to Jolo town proper were also shot only in her underwear! Do you simply claim that it was an encounter when one of the victims is an Army sergeant made to lie flat on his stomach and shot twice in the head in front of his wife?" Tan asked.

Ismulan's widow, Wahal, wife of the slain sergeant, confirmed that her husband was killed in front of her.

Ismulan's son and her husband explained to the soldiers that he was on vacation and that the firearms recovered from his house was government issued, lost to an ambush.

"They ignored our pleas. They dragged my husband before shooting him," Ismulan's wife said. While AFP Western reports

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **OIL PRICES** cut by 50¢/liter /A4
- **11.5%** of Pinoy families crime victims, says survey /A9
- **ENRILE** chides Teves on smuggling, taxes /A6

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GMA pushes stimulus package

WITH HER ECONOMIC managers balking at a proposed P75 billion fiscal stimulus package, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday went ahead and ordered a "surge in infrastructure spending" to protect the economy from a feared slowdown in the United States.

The President admitted that her economic managers want to trim "sort of having problems" with Arroyo foe Jinggoy Estrada's proposal for government to implement a P75-billion fiscal stimulus package to cope with a possible "short but sharp" US recession.

"[The package] would mean a P75 billion deficit when our economic managers are trying to balance the budget this year," Mr. Arroyo said in a speech at the energy summit yesterday.

She said economic managers are concerned that the proposal "might be inflationary," pointing out that the country's the rollback of oil prices became possible was because of the low level of inflation.

The package, which includes increase in rice subsidies, discounts on electricity bills and a boost in infrastructure and farm spending, would require Congress to pass a supplemental budget. Christine D. Avendaño

Bush proposes cuts in US military aid to RP

WASHINGTON—THE PHILIPpines will have its military financing cut by half under a proposal that the Bush administration sent to Congress on Monday.

President George W. Bush requested that $15 million in military aid be sent to the Philippines next year. He requested less than that last year, but the US Congress boosted military aid to almost $30 million.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US, Washington has looked on the Philippines as a valuable ally in the fight against terrorism by concentrating US troops and equipment on Jolo Island where members of the Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf groups, which both have ties to Osama Bin Laden's al-Qaeda international terror network.

Indonesia, another country the White House deems crucial to fighting extremism in Asia, will receive about the same as this year's estimate, nearly $15 million, under Bush's budget proposal.

The Philippines, which was under US control for the first half of the 20th century, and Indonesia have previously had parts of their US military aid linked to improving their human rights records.

US officials have expressed worry over a series of killings of left-wing activists in the Philippines blamed on government forces. Military officials say the military has no policy of targeting militants.

Armed Forces Chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. yesterday told reporters that he has not heard of any cuts or cancellation of US aid to the military.

"The assistance coming from the United States is mostly in the form of joint undertakings like Balikatan (military exercises), and subds are recognize some modifications in terms of equipment, we have not seen any cancellation of any assistance heading or funds that are already committed," Esperon said.

"We are getting as much as we have expected and we hope to get more ... in extraordinary terms like developmental funds," he said.

Included in these developmental projects are repairs worth $3 million to the airport of Jolo, Sulu, and a watchtower system for the province.

"They [US] will commit more funds to the engineering civic action programs. So if there are reductions in usual outlays to the military, there could be more funds that will flow to developmental projects. The relationship as we all know remains very robust and the ties go continue," Esperon said.

Mendiola's request by the Bush administration is the start of a long budget process. The Senate and the House of Representatives must make their own assessment, debate on aid, negotiate from each side would then negotiate a compromise bill before sending it to the President to sign into law.

As Bush, a Republican, enters his last year in office, he faces strong opposition from the Democratic party, which controls Congress. This means there is no guarantee that the budget will be financed at the levels he has requested. AP and Alexis Romero

Oil prices cut by 50¢/liter

By Abigail L. Ho

THE SOFTENING OF WORLD petroleum prices in the past few days has prompted the oil companies to cut gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices by 50 centavos a liter.

Three oil players—Eastern Petroleum Corp. and Seaoil Phil. Inc. initiated the round of price reductions at noon and 2 p.m. yesterday, respectively.

Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Chevron Phil. Inc. effected the same amounts of price cuts at 12:01 a.m. today.

According to energy department data, the regional benchmark Dubai crude dropped to a February average of $87.30 a barrel from $87.37 a barrel last month.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products fell to an average of $90.49 a barrel as of Feb. 1 from the January average of $100.81 a barrel.

MOPS-based diesel also dipped to an average of $107.11 a barrel last month from $107.91 clocked in January.

Only last week, the oil firms reduced diesel prices by 55 centavos to soften the effect of the 2-percentage-point reduction in the tariff on crude and petroleum product imports.

The price of premium unleaded gasoline is now between P42.00 and P41.27 a liter, diesel between P33.91 and P37.03 a liter and kerosene between P35.30 and P43.40 a liter.

SUMMITEERS. President Macapagal-Arroyo joins the opening program at the Philippine Energy Summit at the SM Mall of Asia. Beside her are Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes, Asian Development Bank deputy director Thomas Cruzen and Filipino-Bahraini businessman Edgardo Cruz.

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Energy summit failed, militant group claims

By Jerome Aning

MILITANT GROUPS YESTERDAY SAID THE energy summit organized by the government was a failure because it lacked credible responses and boldness to address the growing concerns of escalating oil prices.

The Bayang Alyansang Makabayan and its allied organizations held a protest rally at the IBM Convention Center in Pasay City on the last day of the three-day summit presided by Arroyo.

"The public gained nothing from this extravaganza show by the Department of Energy. Instead, the people will be burdened with more foreign debts that will be used to facilitate the increased foreign plunder of our energy resources," said Renato Puedilla, a spokesperson for Bayan.

The Freedom from Debt Coalition said that "without changing the paradigm and current policies of the government, the nominal 4 evolutionary would end up in more pollutions to a chronic crisis."

Stakeholders

The summit convened various stakeholders of the energy industry to obtain their inputs on how to mitigate the impact of high oil prices.

Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes yesterday said the recommendations from the summit's various workshops will be systematized and transformed into action plans. (See related story on page B4.)

Reyes said these will also be a mechanism to monitor how the action plans are being implemented.

Reyes said EDC expressed some of the summit recommendations like the development of renewable energy sources and the implementation of the new Biofuels Law and how these can tied up with the promotion of foreign investments.

The EDC said that while the country should pursue the development of alternative, renewable and indigenous energy sources, "investors with just energy projects can always show that it should not be pursued within the narrow framework of foreign investment promotion."

It claimed that international financial institutions were behind the crafting and financing of the policy reforms in the oil and power industry. It noted that ADB loans in the transport and energy sector for the past 10 years was already about $1.6 billion.

Oil deregulation

"Clearly, what manifested during the weeklong summit is the solid defense put up by the government, in behalf of international economic actors such as the ADB and International Monetary Fund-World Bank, and the oil and utility giants in blocking proposals to overhaul the fundamentally-flawed laws and privatization policies which made the costs of oil and power one of the highest in the world," the EDC said.

Bayan and EDC are pushing for the lifting of the value-added tax on oil and power and the cancellation of allegedly onerous contracts with independent power producers to significantly reduce the cost of fuel and power.

They also called for the scrapping of the Oil Deregulation Law and the Electric Power Industry Reform Act to restore and strengthen the role of the state and communities in the energy industry.

The PDC said the proposed summit recommendations such as extending the moratorium on power sprigs and more foreign and private investments in the energy sector, was similar to the Oil Deregulation Law, and would only "exacerbate already serious problems."

Big business warns GMA against lifting VAT on fuel

BIG BUSINESS YESTERDAY JOINED PRESIdent Macapagal-Arroyo in most popular calls to suspend a sales tax on petroleum products, warning that the fallout would be "disastrous" for the economy.

Several prominent politicians, including those planning to stand in the 2010 presidential election, have called on the Palpino head, at 6.00 a 12 percent value-added tax on oil products over six months to cushion the impact of surging oil prices on consumers. (Related story on Page B10)

The Makati Business Club, the Management Association of the Philippines, and the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines recently released estimates that losses of 27 billion pesos (660.67 million dollars) "would make it more difficult to achieve the administration's goal of a balanced budget in 2008."

"The losses could be even greater if the period of suspension is extended, whether a general suspension or a selective one targeting items is a politically popular measure," the three groups said in a joint statement.

They said the sales tax on the new "the single policy reform measure that set on economy sunlight," and "the flopping on policy makers who "apparently have no faith in an investment destroyed" while banning Manila's coverage credit rating and adding to borrowing costs for both the government and private firms.

"If the suspension ends up being a permanent revenue, it would be disastrous for our fiscal health and would jeopardize the implementation of government programs," the statement added.

Senator Manuel Roxas, who is contesting the May 2010 presidential vote, insisted that his goal was "immediate relief" for Filipinos facing lower pump prices.

"If the government does not remove the pressure the people might, then we will. We'll work to give this to him, and the government will have to follow," Roxas said in a statement.

Arroyo has publicly rejected Roxas' proposal. In a speech on Tuesday she said the government would consider a cuts tax refund through a "coupon system" but which Roxas said was too complicated and would not work.

AFP

Corrections

IN THE FEB. 4 ISSUE, a front page story—"BPO vote actually bigger in Manila, not Bird State"—misquoted Dr. Benito Legarda Jr. is a former chair of the National Statistical Institute (NSI). Legarda never held the position. He is, however, a current board member of NSI.

IN THE FEB. 5 ISSUE, an article on Page A6—"2010 Negative fight described as 'opportunity for reform'"—misspelled the name of an Iloilo representative. The representative's name is Bird Tupas Jr.—not Bird Tupas.

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Enrile chides Teves on smuggling, taxes

By Ed Cabuenas

FINANCE SECRETARY MARGARITO TEVES went through the wringer at the Commission on Appointments. He was questioned for hours yesterday about the reported smuggling of P600 million worth of jeweled gemstones and the slashing of tax rates for raw cigarette brand.

Administration Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile delivered the most scathing remarks, berating Teves for his "incompetence" and for "inexplicably acting against the interest of his department" to collect more taxes for the government.

"I told him what he (Teves) is doing is wrong because he has failed to discipline his employees at the Bureau of Customs. How can that be? You are the Finance Secretary, you should discipline your men. He should just stop feeding me because I know," Enrile told reporters after the hearing.

Enrile told Teves he could start by firing Finance Undersecretary Gaudencio Abecina who he said was "responsible for the shortcomings in his department" and has been linked to smugglers.

At yesterday's hearing, a disgruntled intelligence official of the finance department, Rolando Espinosa, appeared to support Teves' appointment, citing his resistance on the alleged smuggling of 26 suitcases filled with power gemstones.

Espinosa testified that the shipment was brought in by an Iranian firm which has plastic king William Estrabelon as partner.

"They dressed the gemstones were for a film exhibition but they used it to sue a petrochemical plant in Batangas. He's got too many excuses, he should start explaining," Enrile later told reporters.

Enrile said he also chided Teves for reversing the 85% reduction on cigarette taxes. The lowering of the taxes of Fell Mall, from P26 per pack, to only P6.74 per pack, resulted in P5.66 billion in unpaid tax losses, he charged.

"I thought we were in dire need of higher collection of taxes?" said Enrile, who chastised Teves for failing to address the issue months after it was raised during a budget hearing.

"I believe he does not know how to run the [BOC Hercules] regulation should come from the [SB four-value fragment] man for himself to...ment the department order. This is wrong," said Enrile.

"If I were the prosecutor of the government, I could charge all of them with graft. The Secretary of Finance should explain why he is doing this," said Enrile.

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A BASIC GUIDE ON THE TAX AMNESTY ACT OF 2007

The following is a basic guide for taxpayers who wish to avail of tax amnesty pursuant of Republic Act No. 9480 (Tax Amnesty Act of 2007).

Who may avail of the amnesty?

The following taxpayers may avail of the Tax Amnesty Program:

- ✓ Individuals
- ✓ Estates and Trusts
- ✓ Corporations
- ✓ Cooperatives and tax-exempt entities that have become taxable as of December 31, 2005
- ✓ Other juridical entities including partnerships.

➢ Fiscal year taxpayers may likewise avail of the tax amnesty using their Financial Statement ending in any month of 2005.

EXCEPT:

- ☒ Withholding agents with respect to their withholding tax liabilities
- ☒ Those with pending cases:
  - Under the jurisdiction of the PCGG
  - Involving violations of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act
  - Involving violations of the Anti-Money Laundering Law
  - For tax evasion and other criminal offenses under the NIRC and/or the RPC
- ☒ Issues and cases which were ruled by any court (even without finality) in favor of the BIR prior to amnesty availment of the taxpayer (e.g. Taxpayers who have failed to observe or follow BOI and/or PEZA rules on entitlement to Income Tax Holiday Incentives and other incentives)
- ☒ Cases involving issues ruled with finality by the Supreme Court prior to the effectivity of RA 9480 (e.g. DST on Special Savings Account)
- ☒ Taxes passed-on and collected from customers for remittance to the BIR
- ☒ Delinquent Accounts/Accounts Receivable considered as assets of the BIR/Government, including self-assessed tax

What taxes are covered by the Tax Amnesty Program?

The Program covers all national internal revenue taxes for the taxable year 2005 and prior years that have remained unpaid as of December 31, 2005 such as:

- ✓ Income tax
- ✓ Estate tax
- ✓ Donor's tax
- ✓ Capital Gains tax
- ✓ Value-added tax
- ✓ Excise tax
- ✓ Documentary Stamp tax
- ✓ Other percentage taxes

What are the procedures in availing of the tax amnesty?

Obtain the necessary forms[1] from the Revenue District Office (RDO) or from the BIR website: http://www.bir.gov.ph/birforms/form_sap.htm

↓

Accomplish or prepare for submission at least three (3) copies[2] of the said forms.

↓

Proceed to the Authorized Agent Bank (AAB) and pay the Amnesty Tax using the Payment Form (BIR Form No. 0617).

↓

File the Tax Amnesty Return, Notice of Availment and SALN with either the AAB or RDO

[1] Forms to be submitted are:
- Tax Amnesty Return (BIR Form No. 2118)
- Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Networth (SALN)
- Tax Amnesty Notice (BIR Form No. 0619)
- Payment Form (BIR Form No. 0617)

[2] Forms may be photocopied. Two (2) copies shall be filed with the BIR, one (1) copy shall remain with the taxpayer.

– Taxpayer need not go to the BIR RDO in availing of the amnesty, but may opt to be assisted by them in preparation of forms and computations.

What are the tax amnesty rates?

SCHEDULE OF AMNESTY TAX COMPUTATION

Individuals, Estates and Trusts	5% of networth or resulting increase in networth or P50,000, whichever is higher
Corporations (including existing corporations under liquidation or dissolution, or surviving corporations for dissolved or absorbed corporations):	
A. With subscribed capital of above P50 M	5% of networth or resulting increase in networth or P500,000, whichever is higher
B. With subscribed capital of above P20 M up to P50 M	5% of networth or resulting increase in networth or P250,000, whichever is higher
C. With subscribed capital of P5M up to P20 M	5% of networth or resulting increase in networth or P100,000, whichever is higher
D. With subscribed capital of below P5 M	5% of networth or resulting increase in networth or P25,000, whichever is higher
Other juridical entities including but not limited to partnerships, cooperatives and foundations that have become taxable as of December 31, 2005	5% of networth or resulting increase in networth or P50,000, whichever is higher

1. For taxpayers who **have not previously filed** their SALN/balance sheet as of December 31, 2005, the amnesty tax shall be equivalent to 5% of the TOTAL DECLARED NETWORTH as of December 31, 2005 as declared in the SALN for the same period submitted to the authorized agent bank, or the absolute minimum amnesty payment, whichever is higher.

2. For taxpayers who **have previously submitted** their SALN as of December 31, 2005, and who desire to avail of the tax amnesty, they shall **amend their previously filed statements** by including still undeclared assets and/or liabilities. The amnesty tax shall be equivalent to 5% of the RESULTING INCREASE in networth as declared in the amended SALN, or the absolute minimum amnesty payment, whichever is higher.

3. For taxpayers who have **previously filed their SALN** as of December 31, 2005 and have **no additional assets to declare**, but still wish to avail of the tax amnesty, the amnesty tax shall be equivalent to 5% of the TOTAL DECLARED NETWORTH as of December 31, 2005 or the absolute minimum amnesty payment, whichever is higher.

What shall the Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Networth (SALN) contain?

The SALN shall contain a true and complete declaration of assets, liabilities and networth of the taxpayer as of December 31, 2005, as follows:

1. Assets within or without the Philippines, whether real or personal, tangible or intangible, whether or not used in trade or business.

2. All existing liabilities, which are legitimate and enforceable, incurred or assumed, whether or not incurred in trade or business, disclosing and indicating the list of creditors specifying their names, addresses, and the amount of the corresponding liability as of SALN date.

3. The total networth of the taxpayer shall be the difference between the total assets and total liabilities.

For amnesty availment purposes, what are the valuation rules?

FOR CORPORATIONS –

All assets, liabilities and networth shall be valued and reflected in the SALN/Balance Sheet following/observing prevailing Philippine Financial Reporting Standards (PFRS/IFRS) unless a different rule is mandated or allowed by the concerned regulatory agency, e.g. SEC, etc.

FOR INDIVIDUALS –

a. For business-related assets and/or liabilities and networth, valuation should follow the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

b. For non-business-related assets and/or liabilities and networth, valuation should be at cost, if acquired through purchase or at Fair Market Value, if acquired through inheritance or donation. Valuations shall be at Fair Market Value/Zonal Value at the time of death or the date of donation, whichever is applicable.

FOR COOPERATIVES, FOUNDATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS –

The valuation of the assets and liabilities and networth shall follow the mandated rules of the concerned regulatory agency namely: Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Cooperatives Development Authority (CDA), etc.

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SONS ON THE RISE Rep. Mikee Arroyo is half of the emerging power bloc in the House, the other half being his younger brother, freshman Camarines Sur Rep. Diego Arroyo. The brothers Arroyo personally and parliamentarily rescued their colleagues to get De Venecia out.

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'It's history catching up with JDV'

From page A1

Mitra recalled that De Venecia had led a faction of administration congressmen that helped the then ruling Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) party in 1992.

Breakaway group

The move split the LDP because Speaker Mitra had already been selected to be the party's standard-bearer over then Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos during the party primaries.

The De Venecia-led breakaway faction proceeded to form the Lakas-Tao party, along with Ramos and former Sen. Raul Manglapus, which became the political vehicle that catapulted Ramos to the presidency in the elections that same year.

"So I asked for it," said Mitra, calling the Senators that Representatives Jose Solis, Marcos Paredes Jr. and Rodolfo Plaza had also volunteered to make the motion.

"In the end, I took the floor while Representative Solis seconded my motion declaring the speakership post vacant. Side by side we cleared the same microphone and podium," he said.

Upon seeing, the young Mitra cannot figure out why former President Corazon Aquino had anointed Ramos as her successor, abandoning his father despite his unquestioned loyalty to the Aquino presidency.

Judgment day

"It might have been his links to Ilonggo," he said, referring to businessman Edmundo Cojuangco, the founder of the binational People's Coalition, who was a political enemy of President Aquino.

"History has judged him (De Venecia) on the same day we celebrated Ninoy's (my father's) birthday," he surmised.

Mitra admitted having goose bumps on Monday when he arrived at the Batasang Pambansa after quietly celebrating his father's birthday with his constituents in Puerto Princesa, Palawan.

"They told me, 'Happy birthday to Speaker Mitra.' I was surprised to learn that so many House employees still remembered my father's birthday," he said.

LDP as majority

The LDP was established in 1980 by then Speaker Jose Cojuangco Jr. as the administration party of his sister, President Aquino.

Its ranks were filled by many of the new congressmen and local officials elected in 1987 and 1988, and included former members of both the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and the anti-Marcos opposition.

The party had the majority in the House during Aquino's term, supporting the presidential bid of Mitra, who subsequently lost even if the LDP was the biggest and best-funded party.

Look who's talking

On Monday, Mitra scoffed at De Venecia's warning to the Ilonggo camp not to bolt lawmakers to vote for his ouster.

"Mr. Speaker, on the moral recovery program and bribery charges, I say 'Look who's talking,'" Mitra said while explaining his vote on his motion to declare the Speaker's position vacant.

He said it was a "big joke" that Dr. Venecia was warning lawmakers about money changing hands to oust him "when he is the father of and root of all corruption in Congress."

"While pointing an accusing finger at his critics, Dr. Venecia's four fingers are directed at himself. It's unfortunate he accused his colleagues of scrambling for himself is the expert at doing," he said. With a report from TJ Burgonio

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GMA questions Meralco system loss charges

From page A1

agency under his department, the Bureau of Consumer Protection (BCP), to petition the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) to grant bigger discounts to low-income consumers.

In lieu of the recommendations of Independent Road Congress to scrap the VAT on electricity to benefit the small-scale power consumers, Mr Arroyo suggested a full refund.

She said that those consumers could be granted discount coupons for electricity consumption that they could redeem at the government, "the government can refund them coupons."

"Where will the money come from? The Malampaya proceeds, taxes, shares and excess profits in the privatization of Napocor and Transco," Mr Arroyo said. Malampaya is the gas field off Palawan.

She said the government wanted to "reach a consensus on efforts to moderate energy costs—a top concern of investors and ordinary Filipino alike."

The government has been known for aiming the highest in the Southeast Asian region.

Provider less as separate item

Mr Arroyo noted that Meralco's system loss was being charged as a separate item. "I instruct the Bureau of Consumer Protection to petition the ERC to prohibit this," she said.

The system loss accounts for 6 percent of a Meralco customer's bill at 59 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh).

Under Republic Act No. 7832, or the Anti-Pilferage of Electricity Act, system loss, regardless of the type, is lumped together in one group and is capped at 9.5 percent for private distribution utilities and 14 percent for electric cooperatives.

Losses in excess of the caps will have to be absorbed by distribution utilities and electric cooperatives.

Unbundling of rates

Meralco president Jesus Francisco said the system loss charge, one of the components of the Meralco electricity bill, was under the principle of rates unbundling, as prescribed by the ERC.

The other line utilities, Mirelco-Inc included, do not gain from the system loss charge, he said. Mirelco-Inc only recover up to 9.5 percent of losses, as prescribed by law," he said.

Mr Arroyo said that apart from removing the system loss charge, another way to bring down power rates is to get Meralco to buy more power from National Power Corp. (Napocor) and the Philippine Electricity Spot Market (WESM).

Meralco rates high

Meralco's getting only around 45 percent of its supply requirements from Napocor and 50 percent from the electricity bourse was one of the reasons the distribution utility's rates are higher than its counterparts, according to Ms Arroyo.

"I'm told that the average selling price of Napocor to all Luzon electric cooperatives is P4.31 kWh. If they buy 100 percent from Napocor. I'm told that Meralco buys electricity from Napocor and Pnoc at past hours, which are more expensive at P6 to P10 per kWh. So the generation charge of Meralco becomes much higher because of the mix," she said.

Ms Arroyo told people would not to the ERC on her key line also when to do because the ERC was independent and quasi-judicial.

"But I can instruct (the Department of Trade and Industry) through the Bureau of Consumer Protection to petition the ERC to require Meralco to buy from Napocor at [non-peak] hours," she said.

Independent power producers

Francisco said the ERC itself had determined that the optimum mix between Napocor supply was when its independent power producers (IPPs) were dispatched as contract levels.

He said Meralco could not depend that much on the Wesm because of the volatility of prices on the spot market.

"When possible, however, instead which we would get some of its supply from the electricity bourse at times when rates were low.

Last month, for example, Francisco said the Wesm's average clearing price was placed at only P3.36 per kWh, inclusive of Napocor's recovery for fuel and foreign exchange-related costs—making the Wesm Meralco's lowest-priced power source at that time.

Highest distribution charge

Ms Arroyo likewise bit Meralco for having the highest distribution charge among the 140 distribution utilities and electric cooperatives operating in the country.

"Maybe the 16-percent income-tax rate hasn't but something to do with it. And maybe that will be the solution to bring it down. I'm petitioning the BIR to stick to the 32-percent ROSB. Perhaps that will require Meralco to charge only the same rate as the distribution utilities in the Visayas and Mindanao," she said.

Cost of capital

Meralco had actually asked the ERC to increase the company's weighted average cost of capital (WACC) to 15.83 percent from the earlier approved 12.8 percent under the distribution utility's performance-based rate-making (PBR) methodology filing, a rate-setting mechanism that replaced the 80 years old ROR scheme.

But it pressed for reconsideration, the power distributor said pegging its WACC at only 12.8 percent "would be unreasonable in light of unfavorable

These pass-through charges account for 57 percent of total monthly charges, leaving only 13 percent, or 92 centavos per kWh, for Meralco's distribution charges, according to Francisco.

"In view of the concern raised by the President on this matter, we appeal to the ERC to prohibit the distribution and system loss charges of all distribution utilities and economics in the country for the benefit of all electricity consumers," Francisco said.

Review transmission charge

Ms Arroyo said the transmission charge that Meralco was collecting from customers should also be examined so to arise "not equally distributed by Meralco to commercial, industrial and residential users."

"This will be one way by which the Department of Transco (National Transmission Corp.) charges can help alleviate the excess burden of the poor and the power-intensive users that need to be competitive," she said.

Seeks to recover P5B

Francisco said Meralco still had to recover around P5 billion worth of payments that it had already advanced to Transco on behalf of the consumers from June 2003 to the present.

He said this was the subject of a pending petition in the ERC.

"Therefore, we would like to emphasize that we are constantly seeking ways to yield the most reasonable rates for our consumers," Francisco said.

Ermita, Belmonte eyed once JDV loses Lakas presidency

From page A1

If Lakas officials said that while the party presidency was a toss-up between Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Quezon City Mayor Sonsy Belmonte, Ermita "is discharging the functions of president, to-all-feel, while JDV is not around."

"So (Ermita) is likely to become the party president," said the official, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to speak on the matter.

Moving quickly to preserve party unity, Ermita yesterday summoned Lakas stalwarts to an emergency meeting in Malacañang. The meeting did not push a decision on De Venecia's continued presidency of Lakas.

Another Lakas official, Bicol-nan, Bangsamoro, Mayor Bascos Bunto, president of both the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines and the League of Municipalities of the Philippines, said De Venecia's move to resign because of his supposedly irreconcilable differences with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"His position as party president is now untenable," said Bunto, a cousin of Ms Arroyo.

De Venecia founded Lakas-CMD in 1992 with then Vice President Fidel Ramos and the late Sen. Raul Manglapus.

Threat of a split

The power play within Lakas has already been felt outside as media.

Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone, spokesperson of the Governors League of the Philippines, last week resigned from Lakas and said 14 mayors from his province were joining him.

Her franchise told reporters that assuming De Venecia as party president was "not proper" and could further divide the ruling party.

Other party members have also threatened to jump ship and move over to the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi)—the other party in the ruling coalition—if the leadership of Lakas failed to move swiftly and solidify its ranks, warned Evardone.

Bac Bay Bagarez, the Lakas executive director, said this was pure intrigue.

"The party is intact and strong. Even President Arroyo is the chair of Lakas. The new Speaker of the House is also Lakas," he said, referring to Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles.

Lakas will survive

Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, the secretary general of Lakas, also attended the party meeting, along with Nograles, and Lakas would survive as it had in the past.

"We have survived already the three impeachment cases because this party does not rest on personality but on set platforms. We survived the impeachment cases during the Estrada administration," he said.

Zubiri said that at the time, the party was in congress. Lakas had doubled from 129 to 222, but that when Ms Arroyo came to power, their number ballooned again to 138.

"So we will survive. We take this crisis as an opportunity to see if our members are truly loyal to the party or to personalities," he said, adding that he will face the presidential election in 2010 and there will be realignments. That is a given," he said.

Lessons from LDP

Zubiri said Lakas would remain the dominant party with 80 congressmen and 44 provincial governors out of a possible 81. Half of the 131 cities are also under Lakas mayors.

He denied that Lakas would go the way of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino—which ceased to be the dominant party after the defeat of Speaker Ramon Mitra in the 1992 presidential polls.

Evardone said the political drama had "affected" the administration coalition.

He said national directorate meeting set for Thursday had been canceled "indefinitely."

"I don't know why. Maybe one of the reasons is the result of the election of the Speaker," Evardone said.

'Major predicament'

But Nograles said the expansion of national directorate assembly was moved to Feb. 21 to "accommodate requests of other party leaders who want to attend."

Evardone claimed that two governors and several congressmen, whom he did not name, were planning to join Lakas and join Kampi.

"If there are cracks in Lakas, I don't know if it will result in its disintegration or not but there are cracks," said the governor.

He said De Venecia's position as party president was "a major predicament" for Lakas members who were allied with the Palace.

"Where will they go?" he said.

"Maybe, Lakas' breakup is inevitable. I hope the Lakas leadership will immediately act swiftly on the issue. Otherwise, Lakas might split into fast-time."

Asked to which party he now belonged, Evardone said: "I am with the President. There's no question about it. I don't know if many will follow suit, but many in Lakas are thinking of leaving Lakas. Maybe, their interests are not being addressed. I don't understand Secretary Gonzalez Puno, Kampi's president on leave, yesterday again raised the possibility of a merger between Lakas and his party.

"Now that we have a new Speaker, it will make this proposition [later] ... We are willing to merge with Lakas under equitable arrangements," Puno told reporters.

"Lakas will only get bigger proportionately in 2010. Hopefully, by that time there won't be any confusion about the President's party because there will only be one."

Puno denied he had a hand in De Venecia's political downfall.

JDV bolting Lakas?

"This was as much a Lakas meeting as anybody else's. I am wondering why there are saying it was Kampi who started this," he said.

On the possibility of De Venecia joining the opposition, Puno laughed.

"I don't know if JDV will go to the opposition because he is still president of Lakas. I don't think he is prepared to leave the party he helped form."

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunoy said De Venecia's allegations "are the musings of a loser."

"If the President did not want them to support," Bunoy said, she will not.

He admitted the objective of Senator's Lakas caucus in Malacañang was to come up with a "graceful exit" for De Venecia and convince him to agree to a consensus vote.

"If only this money could have been preserved if he (De Venecia) believed that the other side already had the numbers," said Bunoy.

Bunoy claimed De Venecia "was moving heaven and earth to have a photo-op with the President at the golf game just to show that the President is still supporting him."

He was referring to a golf game that Lakas organized on Sunday at Malacañang Park. Ms Arroyo skipped the golf game. Read reports, from Alcuin Papa and Christine O. Avendaño

Night of a hundred knives: Arroyos vs De Venecias over spoils

From page A1

of Julius Caesar on March 15, 44 BC, in the Roman Senate. Caesar was stabbed 23 times by around 60 or more conspirators, in a plot to "liberate" the Roman Republic from his dictatorship.

In four hours of voting and speeches over a resolution declaring the speakership vacant to pave the way for the election of a Malacañang-appointed candidate, Rep. Prospero Nograles and Davao City Rep. Ruy Elias were nominated by 174 congressional votes—an unanimous move before seen in the history of leadership change in the House.

GMA's revealing role

Policy issues were clearly absent in the entire campaign, reducing the matter of De Venecia's removal to a results between the Arroyos and the De Venecias over the spoils of office—an issue basically connected with corruption.

Nograles, the anointed of Rep. Manuel Roxas as Speaker at the behest of Senate President Manuel Quezon in 1934 over their bitter conflict on the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Bill, the independence legislation enacted by the US Congress, was swift and merciful.

The upheavals over the speakership that followed in the newly-independent era lasted until 1946 were similarly quick and less bloody.

De Venecia's ouster broke the record for viciousness.

It demonstrated the ruthlessness of the exercise of presidential power to muster a Speaker who had fallen from Malacañang's grace.

The hand of President Macapagal-Arroyo in the campaign to remove De Venecia was revealed to the active role of her sons—Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo of Bulacan and Rep. Dennis "Denis" Arroyo of Camarines Sur—in the act.

Another indicator of presidential support for the removal campaign was that the mainstream calling for the declaration of loss of confidence in De Venecia was initiated by the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi), Ms Arroyo's own party, which has weathered less storms than her predecessor's.

It is problematic whether the administration coalition will remain intact or has been ruptured by the break.

Whether the rupture with Ms Arroyo would switch De Venecia to the opposition is also unclear. He told Inquirer he would not join Lakas and would remain in parliament, and that he and former President Fidel Ramos, Lakas chair emeritus, would try to rebuild it as a major party. (See related story on Page A1.)

And he sees misbehavior, saying: "I will join the Iraqis against corruption with the opposition, and point the finger down if the down things right or denounce her [Mrs down something wrong]."

The question arises: Did De Venecia's removal as Speaker undermine him as an influential political force?

When I asked him for whose benefit he was removing as so-called Lakas, he said: For the President, who, he said, would move to build Kampi as the dominant party.

Vote breakdown

De Venecia admitted that his removal had led to cracks in Lakas.

The extent of the damage wrought on the majority coalition by the rift as well as his resignation may be seen in the following breakdown of the vote:

Of the 174 votes cast for De Venecia's ouster, 56 were from Lakas, 42 from Kampi, 39 from the Liberal Party, three from the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino, seven from the Nacionalista Party, and 24 from the Nationalist People's Coalition.

Of the 131 votes voted against it, 21 were from Lakas, two from LP, one from NP, one from PDP-Laban, eight from party-list groups, and two from the Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino.

Of the 16 abstentions, five were from Lakas, three from NPC, and the rest, from other parties.

Thus, the small party congressmen that formed the "rainbow coalition" voted for De Venecia's removal and are now the main components of the new alliance.

The biggest gainer appears to be Nograles, now the second biggest coalition partner after Lakas. The primary point now is how this realigned coalition will fare. Since De Venecia's leadership, can he mobilized to muster sufficient votes to, one, defeat the leprosy-born new impeachment attempts, and, two, push key legislation.

Reforms

Some of those who voted for De Venecia's removal claimed that they did so to pave the way for reforms in De House, fairer distribution of committee chairmanships and representation on the Commission on Appointments (particularly the LP), and regional representation in the speakership.

The Mindanao bloc highlighted the fact that, for the first time in Nograles, a man from Mindanao would be elected Speaker.

There is one said anything about reform in the pork barrel patronage system.

Whether Nograles can construct a coalition designed primarily to defend the stability of the presidency in the next two-and-a-half years remains to be seen.

This has nothing to do with reforms. It has more to do with subservience.

11.5% of Pinoy families crime victims, says survey

JUST OVER ONE OF EVERY 10 FILIPINO families (11.5 percent) had a member who was the victim of a theft crime between June and December but even the latest Social Weather Stations survey showed.

The survey also found that around the same number (11.1 percent) lost property in a home break-in while 1.9 percent suffered physical violence over the same period.

In car-owning families, 2.9 percent said they had their vehicle stolen.

Of the street crime victims, 8.6 percent encountered pickpockets.

Crime list

Since 2003, SWS has been asking respondents if any of their household members had been a victim of theft outside the home, a home break-in or an act of violence in the past six months. In 1992, SWS added auto or vehicle theft to the list.

"Victimization of families by common crime was 14.9 percent in August 2004 but dropped to 6.3 percent in June 2006. It was in double digits from September 2006 to February 2007, ranging from 10.7 percent to 13.2 percent," SWS said. "The rose to 9.6 percent in June and 9.5 percent in September but rose to 11.5 percent in December."

The Fourth Quarter 2007 Social Weather Survey also showed that on average a family is victimized 1.2 times.

The number of street-crime victims was highest in Metro Manila, with 16.1 percent of families, up from 9.5 percent in September.

According to Philippine National Police statistics, cell phones were the most stolen item in the first quarter of 2006, followed by bags.

Nationwide upsurge

The police force said cell phone theft has "exacerbated highly to the upsurge in street crime nationwide."

SWS said its questionnaire did not specify whether the victims of quick-fingered thieves lost their wallets, jewelry or cell phones.

In Metro Manila, 5 percent of families suffered a home break-in, while 3.2 percent had their vehicle lost. The number of Metro Manila families that reported having a family member beat through physical violence during the period was 2.2 percent.

Outside Metro Manila, the number of street crime victims was in the single digits: 9.7 percent in the balance of Luzon, 4.7 percent in Mindanao and 3.1 percent in the Visayas.

The number of families that suffered a break-in in Luzon outside Metro Manila was 3.3 percent, in the Visayas it was 1.7 percent and Mindanao 2.3 percent.

Of vehicle-owning families surveyed in Luzon outside Metro Manila, 2.3 percent reported losing a car.

"No car theft cases were found in the Visayas and Mindanao samples of vehicle-owning families for December 2007," SWS said.

The number of families that reported physical violence on a member was 1.5 percent in Luzon outside Metro Manila, 4.7 percent in the Visayas and 1 percent in Mindanao.

The survey was conducted from Nov. 30 to Dec. 3, 2007, using face-to-face interviews with 1,200 adults divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

"The SWS surveys on crime victimization are not commissioned, but are done on SWS' own initiative and released as a public service," the polling firm said. Mary Mathews, Inquirer Research

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Wednesday, February 6, 2008
Ash Wednesday

1st Reading:	Jl 2: 12-18
2nd Reading:	2 Cor 5: 20-6: 2
Gospel:	Mt 6: 1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be careful not to make a show of your righteousness before people. If you do so, you do not get anything from your Father in heaven. When you give something to the poor, do not have it announced before you, as the those who come to the synagogues and in the streets to or do so be praised by the people. I assure you, they have been already paid in full.

"If you give something to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your gift remains really secret. Your Father who sees what is kept secret, will reward you.

"When you pray, do not be like those who want to be seen. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues or on street corners to be seen by everyone. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. When you pray, go to your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is with you in secret, and your Father who sees what is kept secret will reward you.

"When you fast, do not put on somberlike them as do the hypocrites. They put on a gloomy face, to parade (as) that they fast. Truly, I tell you they have been paid in full already. When you fast, wash your face and make yourself look cheerful, because you are not fasting for appearances or for people, but for your Father who sees what is kept secret. And your Father, who sees what is kept secret will reward you."

Commentary

"You are alive and now dust you shall return." These verbal words, accompanied by the imposition of ashes upon our heads, mark the beginning of our penitential journey into the Lenten season. It is a time of conversion (turning away from sin and returning toward God and love).

This is the most important love that you will ever face. Now is the time to put aside whatever keeps you from the Lord. Now is the time to open wide door to a deeper relationship with Jesus through the sacraments of the Church.

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Gov't grabs ZTE witness

Front page A1

Sen. Benigno Aquino III, who joined the close watch at the airport, said Lozada sent a text message to a brother only last night saying he was escorted to the airport and taken somewhere by "men of honor."

The brother, Arthur Lozada, was with the Gun team leader who had tried to serve the arrest order on the witness.

"Nag-sasabi daw [brother niya, nag-hintay na lang sa kanya si Lozada sa airport at nasa sa kanya na raw siya. Ipaalam daw sa media," Aquino told reporters, relaying his conversation with Arthur Lozada.

In an interview over radio dzMM, Lozada's sibling said he appealed to whoever was holding her husband to release him.

"I just want my husband back. I just want my husband back. Please, huliin niyo na ang asawa ko, huliin niyo na sa totoo lang," said Mirlo Lozada.

Asked by program hosts Ricardo Tuberan and Gerry Baja if her husband had told her why he had suddenly come home, she answered: "Hindi niya na ang asawa ko, huliin niyo na sa totoo."

Also over dzMM, Lozada's older sister Carmen expressed the family's anxiety: "Kung [the whole family is worried]. I am very worried. Our concern is where is he, where has [he] been [taken] to him? How come the [Senate] arresting officer did not get him?"

Carmen Lozada said the family would rather have her brother in custody than be in the Senate. She said Lozada called up his family from the airport to say that he was coming home.

"He was frightened for his family," she told dzMM. "The last time I talked to him, it was like he was having his time to food."

The aide said her brother had insisted on coming home and was not on the run. "Hindi siya humahakbang. Kaya siya umuwi ... hindi siya pwedeng mag-stop kung sana umuwi. Kasi Pilipinas ang hiyaan niya."

Ranking officials

Airport insiders reported seeing retired Gen. Angelo Reyes, the airport security chief who is known to be close to the First Family, and Dennis "Bing" Uvero, terminal manager of Philippine Airport International Airport Terminal 1 (Naia 1), with Lozada as he was being taken out of the terminal.

Neither official could be reached starting in the afternoon until early evening yesterday.

Gun staff and other Senate security personnel who were sent to take custody of Lozada did not see him among the passengers who took the normal route from the arrival gate through the immigration counters and then on to the baggage conveyors.

They were only granted lobby access to the terminal, a long walk away from the arrival gate.

"The [senior] said somebody [whom] he did not know] picked him up.... They spoke on the phone.... Here he [sat on longer be reached]. Para nakarating ng Pilipinas [that] he was able to set foot in the country]..." said Sr. Insp. Mark L, a family friend who had talked to the airport as a "source of secret support" for Lozada.

Said Edwin Lacierda, legal counsel of the civil society group Black and White Movement (BWM) who had gone to the airport to make sure that Lozada was promptly taken into Senate custody: "His wife [Mirlo] is distraught. The family did not expect this to happen. The arrangement was that he was going to be delivered to the Senate."

"This is obstruction of justice, defying a lawful order from the Senate. If it is proven that he was taken against his will, it could be kidnapping."

Supreme Court order

As it happened, the Gun was twice thwarted yesterday, with the Supreme Court handing down an order stopping Reed's arrest.

The high court's stamp was on an order denying the Senate to hold Lozada in contempt and penalizing Reed in handed down the arrest warrant on Neri, while the tribunal deliberates on his petition questioning the warrant and seeking to stop the Senate from citing him for contempt for failing to appear at the Senate's inquiry into the NBN-ZTE deal.

"I consider it a triumph of the rule of law and we have the Supreme Court to thank for it," Neri said in a text message to the business.

He said that with the high court's ruling, he would remain in work today.

Neri, who headed the National Economic and Develop. ment Authority when the NBN-ZTE deal was approved and is now chair of the Commission on Higher Education, filed the petition against the Senate in December.

Last week, he filed a supplemental motion to annul the arrest warrant that the Senate had issued.

Oral arguments on Neri's petition are scheduled on March 4. The respondent Senate committees have been told to comment on the petition by 10 days.

As for Lozada, Supreme Court spokesperson Ana Melia Mampusti said the tribunal's order did not apply to him.

Only in Hong Kong

Neri and Lozada were ordered arrested by the Senate blue ribbon committee for failing to appear in last week's hearing, where they were expected to testify on the door wrapped NBN-ZTE deal.

Lozada left the country for a reported self-exile trip to Lanzhou in Gansu province in China on Jan. 30, just a few hours before he was to face the Senate. But sources said Lozada only stayed in Hong Kong.

He was known to have wanted NBN-ZTE deal while the Alunan June Prep" de benavidez III to challenge his build-operate-transfer proposal for the NBN project, and was also said to be Neri, also a rival reformer.

Both Neri and Joey de Venecia had implicated President Macapagal-Arroyo's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, and then Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos in the deal allegedly tainted by bribery and conspiracy. Both have repeatedly denied the accusations.

Parked on the tarmac

An airline staff member said Lozada's lawyer arrived at the arrival gate but was soon on where he was taken.

According to the report relayed by the Gun to Sen. Alan Cayetano, Lozada was met by unknown persons as he emerged from the plane, was taken down to the tarmac in front of the tunnel that connects the plane and the passengers' arrival area, and was whisked into a vehicle parked right at the entrance.

Lozada no longer passed through immigration and customs check.

"Don't tell me they can do that in the airport without a higher up involved," Cayetano said after he was reportedly told by his source.

Cayetano said Neri had just brought himself some time, but that he would eventually be compelled to appear before the Senate.

"We respect and we'll follow the court upon any order. We have to respect the court. We're in clarify the boundaries between Malacañang and the Senate, but we are confident the long line of decisions of the Supreme Court will be upheld, that the Senate has the power to compel people to testify," he said. With reports from Joelle A. Salterio, Kristine L. Alave and Christine O. Avendaño

Palace denies hand in Lozada disappearance

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY denied having a hand in the "kidnapping" of Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr.

Said Deputy Presidential Spokesperson Anthony Golez:

"We have no idea about the whereabouts of Lozada. And we also understand that he went to the Senate to deny knowledge of the ZTE deal and the media reports about him."

Golez also said he had spoken with members of the Cabinet who "really have no knowledge about [Lozada]."

He dismissed accusations that Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita had been behind the disappearance of Lozada.

"The allegations that the Palace is involved are totally baseless and purely fabrication of because we are already denying [knowledge of] the whereabouts of Lozada," he said.

Michael Lim Ubac

'We didn't do it'

By Tarra Quismundo

AIRPORT OFFICIALS LAST night denied that Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. was abducted at the Nala-1 Terminal, suggesting that he willingly went with a police officer upon arrival.

A certain SPO4 Roger Valeroso had "coordinated" with Nala authorities concerning his assignment to take Lozada into custody, according to retired Gen. Angel Bautista, chief of Nala's security and emergency services unit.

"Valeroso came here and coordinated with us. He said he was the one who will take Lozada. When they met, they were already hands and had a chat. Apparently they know each other," Bautista said when reached on the phone early this morning.

Bautista could not say, though, how Valeroso gained access to the terminal's passenger areas, considering that outsiders, including police officers who are not members of the Aviation Security Group, need a special pass to enter.

He said after talking to Senate Sergeant-at-Arms Jose Balgoslao were the phone minutes after Lozada's plane landed.

Cayetano claims the Senate blue ribbon committee.

Sources said Lozada was first taken from the arrival gate up to the departure area, and from there to an elevator that went straight to the airport's ramp area. A waiting vehicle then took him toward the direction of the VIP lounge. At that time, he was technically "under the custody and under coordination" with Nala authorities.

Minutes before Lozada's arrival, Gun men exchanged jokes with registered waiting at the arrival concourse and asked "Who are you waiting for here?"

Asked whether the Gun staff member who escorted Lozada to the arrival gate but was soon on where he was taken.

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Villar's appeal

In a statement, Senate President Manuel Villar said he had received a call from Lozada's wife expressing fears for the witness' safety and asking for the Senate's help to make sure that he was out of danger.

"We stressed from the [Gun] staff's instructions to the safe appearance of Mr. Lozada's arrival in the airport where he was reportedly met by his position declared ex-aunt, De Venecia identified the President's husband and Malacañang as those behind the massive corruption against him.

Partner in corridors of power

De Venecia also identified Pangan in one of "the partners in the corridors of power in Malacañang."

The businessman has a stake in the company that won the bidding for the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) assets. The company needs a legislative franchise before it can start operating the transmission assets.

De Venecia in his speech criticized the awarding of the Transco assets to Monte Oro Grid Resources Corp., the firm affiliated with Razon, because a company of businessman Sebastian Zaragoza had offered a much higher bid.

Secrets of administration

Joey said his father and the De Venecia family were happy that he had cut his ties with the President. The younger De Venecia said life is now simpler, now seems to be ahead of what the former Speaker might say about the secrets of the administration.

Joey said his father was sad but glad as events over his cause

"Up to the end my father tried to protect the President. That's how good he is. He's a very nice man. He's a gentleman but when there was too much already and Ricky Razon was already giving P4 million each...," Joey said.

Asked when and how the P4-million bribe was distributed, Joey said: "If you're giving away P4 million, you wanna look him [the recipient] in the eye and say this is what you will do in the future."

Joey and the President's husband also controlled the flow of the multibillion-peso pork barrel and used this to prompt his father's allies to desert him.

"PGI is the one who says who will get what. He will block the release of funds," he said, adding that the most important thing he can guarantee because it is for the projects in their districts," he said.

"The pork barrel is part of the budget that Congress approves then it goes to the executive. That's the problem because the executive has the power to say, 'If you are reasonable enough, the executive would give you your P70-million pork barrel even if you are considered as," the younger De Venecia said. With reports from Charlie C. Gelera, Ryan D. Rosario and Germelino Lacorte, Inquirer Mindanao

JDV son says Mike A, Razon funded ouster

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"Ricky Razon gave P1 million for each congressman. It started at P1 million plus pork barrel projects," Juan "Joey" de Venecia III said in an interview at his home.

Joey made the accusation the day after his father was ousted by administration allies led by the President's two sons—Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo and Camarines Sur Rep. Diosdado Arroyo—over the alleged P329-million jueteng payoffs to the Arroyos linking their father to kickbacks in the scrapped $329-million ZTE broadband deal.

It was Joey who helped the President's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, to the allegedly corrupted ZTE deal in Senate hearings on the National Broadband Network (NBN) project, which sought to link government agencies and local government units using a high-speed telecommunications network.

The younger De Venecia said that while the President's husband was out of the country, he had directed the senior more against his father.

"[Ex-Comelec chairman Antonio] is the minister who's orchestrating this, going online, to those guys—Razon and the [First Gentleman's] kids," said Joey, whose company, transmitters buildings for, had offered to bid for the NBN project but lost the deal to Chinese ZTE Corp.

"They're giving out money and based on my experience with ZTE, it's a dirty deal—padding and giving the kickbacks," he said.

Asked for proof of his charges, the younger De Venecia said he got the information from his source in the Palace. "I think they have spies of corrupt funds," he said.

Nonsense

In a text message to the senior, Razon dismissed Joey's charges as "the latest on his endless list of nonsense."

The controversial businessman challenged the younger De Venecia to present his allegations in front of a public forum. "Where should he be heard? He should come up with one congressman that I even talked to. If he cannot present proof, I'll sue him," said Razon, their and president of port operator International Container Terminal Services Inc.

"If it is true that 170 congressmen voted against his father, that only means they wanted a new Speaker and his father is just a non issue," Razon said.

The former Speaker also said yesterday that he received information that the President's husband and Razon handcuffed the

Things money can't buy

Rep. Ali Ziagaldeen Balindong of the second district of Lanao del Sur said he could have gotten the P2 million.

"I heard of the P5-million grease money circulating but I did not really care about it. Because, I still believe that there are things that money can't buy," said Balindong, the Lakas president there, who voted against the motion to declare the position of Speaker vacant.

Newly installed Speaker Prospero Nograles denied that Arroyo and Razon funded the lawmakers' support for his speakership.

Not true

"That's not true. I hardly know

Ridley Razon," Nograles told reporters in the House before he presided over his first session after being elected Speaker.

Nograles, nonetheless, acknowledged that the President's husband may be linked to his speakership bid because two sons of the First Couple were behind him.

Asked if Mr Arroyo's husband gave the imprimatur for De Venecia's ouster and his taking the post, Nograles said, "I don't know."

But he said, "If I were the son, I'd have to be behind."

Reacting to De Venecia's allegations that money was involved in the leadership change, Malacañan Rep. Abraham Kahlil Mitra, an ardent supporter of Nograles in the speakership fight, said, "Look who's talking?"

"The image of the House is this bad because of the things he did in the past," the congressman, who is the son of the late Speaker Ramon Mitra, said of De Venecia.

Mitra said the money changed hands to make members of the House vote for declaring the Speaker's seat vacant, Mitra said. "Even positions were not offered to the congressmen. How much more so money?"

In his speech on Monday night just before 154 lawmakers voted

German lawmakers meeting new Speaker

Front page A1

ing to oust Philippine Speaker

The nine-member delegation from the Bundestag (German legislature) is on a three-day visit to the Senate and the House of Representatives, as well as to German-supported projects in Mindanao.

Headed by Dr. Klaus Lippold of the Christian Democratic Union Group, the group arrived on a Thai Airways flight at 1:20 p.m., only hours after a majority of the 230 member Philip-

pine House of Representatives moved to oust Speaker Jose de Venecia and replaced him with Rep. Prospero Nograles.

First foreign visitors

"You see, I can't answer your question who we [would] meet because he [Germany deputy head of mission Pia Steinmann] said things changed up in last night ... as I was informed, yes? Because the change was late in the evening, yeah?" Lippold said with a chuckle.

The Germans may well be "the first" first foreign visitors. The newly elected Speaker will be hearing lunch for them during their visit, according to Leandro Espina Rey of the House Interpreters-Translators Relations Office.

"I think it's a little bit unsettling for us, you can't express [something] neither ... like this," Lippold told the foreigners at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport's dignitaries lounge.

Lippold, who is also chair of the Bundestag's German-Asean Interaction of Southeast Asian National Group, said the delegation would meet with Philippine government officials to get their views on the recently approved Asean Charter.

Asean Charter

"The purpose of the journey is to talk to politicians here about the Asean Charter to see how they rate the Asean Charter and what do they expect in the next year from the development inside Asean. It's our opinion that Germany and Europe should not only look at China or India in Asia but to the Asean states, too," Lippold said.

Intensify Asean ties

"The Asean states are very important for Germany and very important for Europe, too. And, therefore, it's good for us to intensify the relations [with Germany, from Europe, to the Asean and the Philippines," he added.

Hehrmann said his group would travel to Mindanao [tomorrow] to see a power plant project of a private firm Sirang and other humanitarian projects in Cagayan de Oro City, Sir. German reporter and the German Embassy have been helping out in the projects, he said.

"We always like not to look at the right side because the capital is not the whole country. And, therefore, we'd like to go a little bit outward and see how life is like outside the capital, outside Manila," Lippold said.

Stranded under bridge, 111 Pinoys appeal for repatriation from Saudi

By Jerome Aning

AN OVERSEAS WORKERS WEL-FARE group yesterday appealed to the government to speed up the immediate repatriation of at least 111 Filipino workers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, many of whom are camped in tents under a city flyover because they were duped by illegal recruiters.

In a statement, Migrante Saudi Arabia called on Philippine consular authorities to push for the mass repatriation of the Filipinos and not to force them through a legal process.

The Filipinos, along with others, stranded migrant workers from other countries, have been camping out under the Al-Shamchin Bridge in Jeddah waiting for repatriation. The area has become a virtual tent city, according to Migrante.

The group said the Filipinos reportedly includes 24 women and a 2-year-old child.

"We believe it is the height of callousness to ask them to go through the same process that forced them to camp out under the bridge in the first place," said the Migrante statement.

Some Filipinos who went to the consulate were told they had to observe "due process" before they could be repatriated since they were "illegals," some had escaped from their employers.

Reports in Middle East dailies said the Filipinos were victims of "Visas" who collected "fees" ranging from SR6 to 2,500 Saudi Riyals (equivalent to about P5,529 to P27,646) in exchange for a promised "freelancer visa" from Jeddah.

It turned out, however, that the Filipinos were merely dumped off near the flyover supposedly to wait to be picked up by passengers looking for dependence.

Migrante chair Eddy Quizon said they have identified at least 111 Filipinos waiting for repatriation in Jeddah alone.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

The assassination of JDV

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENTS HAVE TOPPLED SPEAKERS BEFORE, but never in such gaslighted fashion. The removal of Jose de Venecia Jr. had all the elements of a Mafia assassination. False premises were made, not only to give De Venecia a false sense of security, but in order to deceive the public. Intimidating announced no actions nor to take place on Mondays. In so doing, it hoped media and public attention would be deflected, and the risks of De Venecia making a harmful speech would be rationalized since he wouldn't have time to prepare, and the public wouldn't be expecting it. The takeover would be neat, and clean.

This is why the impotence of Pulawan Rep. Abraham Mitra was so unseemly, but so politically understandable. He audibly moaned to declare the speakership vacant, and then, during the two hours the session was adjourned, he kept urging its resumption regardless of procedures, in the caucuses that took place in the House during that two-hour lull, the snatching orders from the Palace were clear: save congressmen some embarrassment by refusing a roll call vote, and deny De Venecia his swan song. But in the full glare of publicity, the Palace failed to achieve either. Instead of a surgical strike, every House member had to step up and do his part in the dirty deed.

We say dirty not in the sense that it was an unfitting end for De Venecia's speakership—the country gloried in his fall, we have to say. But in all the long history of bowdlerizing by the House of Representatives, never had it instantaneously surrendered so abjectly, so cowardly, so executive influence as it did last Monday. For it rejected, not just a Speaker hand-picked by the Palace, which is par for the course, instead it elected three speakers: Prospero Nograles, and the Arroyo brothers, Mikey and Dato.

All the fig leaves meant to disguise the naked greed of the congressmen, all the orations about "reform" and "change" were shibboleths, words long stripped of their real meaning, concepts long ago discarded as outmoded by the House. They were excuses which time and again the congressmen who rose to register their votes revealed as secondary. To what? Their projects, their profit. In talking turns to genuflect before the President's sons, and their partners in politics, they voted not for change or reform, but for more of the same.

It was a vote of confidence in a system refined by the administration, with the enthusiastic participation, once upon a time, of De Venecia himself, where the House abandoned all fiscal independence and narrowly defined the powers of the purse strictly to Malacañang. In that sense, De Venecia was killed by an instrument of his own making.

He thoroughly believed that politics is a numbers game, not resolving, until the moment of his own political peril, that numbers in politics are written in the sand. He'd hoped to forma big party at public expense, yet when another party proved better in mobilizing the cash, his party became an accomplice in his fall.

It's a cautionary tale about power. But De Venecia's fall is not the cause for public revulsion at what transpired in the House. Instead, it was the sight of old and young leaders united by avarice and blinded by ambition. The hopeless neo-congressional politics resolved by the 84 neophytes at the House makes it truly disserving of what was said by Antonio Luna on Emesto Macedo, who ironically sat as a witness to the Monday night ouster: "So young, and yet so..." All of them.

For the public, it was a sign that what the House has become will persist: a lapdog institution, with no sense of independence or integrity, heedless of its constitutional prerogatives. And of a monumental pseudo-parliamentary system to come, ruled by a ruthless First Family of political buccaneers. No one can have any illusions, at this point, that their appetite, already unbounded, is now out of control.

We are reminded of how the Batasang Pambansa meekdered its approval of Marcos Tarquin's proclamation of Ferdinand Marcos as the victor in the 1986 snap elections. They were oblivious to the sentiment of the public, which consigned the dictator's rubber stamp to the dustbin of history. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was as cocky then as the Arroyo brothers are now.

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JDV revealed what he knew when it was too late

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

GRAMS, JOSE DE VENECIA SAW THE LIGHT too late, as president, he went down kicking and screaming. He delivered a scathing hour-long speech in the House attacking President Macapagal-Arroyo, practically calling her an ingrate and a traitor. He said those Malacañang aides want to be home in the dead of night to beg to be made the vice presidential running mate, and to grant her wish, he called all the other VP aspirants to withdraw. She won but he lost. Ito Joseph Estrada: Ito ang sabi ng mga aides ng aking mga kaibigan sa social welfare secretary. He didn't say who he lost and the rest. Did she push him? He didn't say, but from what he revealed of his presidency later on, he might as well have pushed him.

JDV said he knew about the cheating in the elections, the corruption, etc. The trouble is, he let himself down from running time ago but kept quiet. He revealed those only when he was about to be kicked out. He revealed that he had said he would by GMA during the impeachment trial coup attempts, during all the crises she faced but she signed him with treachery and reprehensible.

Had he revealed these years or months ago, he would have done the country some good. Last Monday evening, it was too late. They were already putting the boots around his neck. He was like the condemned prisoner supporting the chair when he was being brought to the execution area.

You have to lament that most of his co-worthy, like those in the House were carrying daggers. And like Julius Caesar, they were stabbing the senior statesman who stabbed him in the back in the halls of the House.

It is his fault. He chose to stay silent on the cheating and corruption that he knew, and when he had the votes he knew the ito was no. And he revealed these earlier, public opinion could have saved him. Last Monday the people could not do anything.

He also used to rule his colleagues in his style: by carrots for their cooperation and by sticks for those who refused to go with the pork barrel. That didn't help him. The lunch party was already well under way.

Speaker Prospero Nograles should have a lesson from JDV's sad fate. JDV was too subservient to the President. She didn't make the House independent as the Constitution mandated. And what did he get for that subservience? Treachery.

So Speaker Nograles, do not be a lackey of Malacañang. Be independent. The people will be with you when Malacañang gets tired of you and tries to dump you. Do what is right for the people and the people will do right by you.

And now that JDV has seen the light, he should expose what he knows of the GMA administration, particularly the cheating. For example, how did it happen that the Congress copies of the election returns of the vice presidential race showed Dick de Castro winning while the seven other copies showed Loren Legarda winning? Maybe he could get his revenge by having the two top officials impeached.

* * *

For the first time, except for Sen. Miguz Zubiri, the Kapilipun ng Gamot had an all-doctor oil-medicine panel of guests: Jun Brandez (Strength), however, they could not agree on the cheaper medicine bill. Representatives Raymund Mitra and Jeanette Garcia both doctors and among the co-authors of the bill, want doctors to prescribe only generics to their patients. Doctors Mingaily Puddle, Pantilo Lazo, Pat Cortes, Antrigan del Rosario and Cinderfredo Bettencourt, all speaking for the Philippine Medical Association, want doctors to prescribe branded drugs.

Mitra and Garcia said prescribing only generic drugs will give patients cheaper medicine as their branded equivalents, moreby sold by a cartel of multinational pharmaceutical companies, are very expensive. The PMA doctors said, on the other hand, that doctors are not concerned with the price of medicines. What they are concerned with is the health of their patients, and they know from experience that some generic drugs are not as effective as branded ones.

I asked, why not allow doctors to prescribe both generic and branded medicine and let the patient decide after explaining to them the advantages and disadvantages of each as the lawyers Act allows them to do?

Both sides had no objection to that but said it was Health Secretary Francisco Duque who had recommended the generics-only provision which effectively repeals some of the provisions of the Generics Act.

But why listen to Duque? I have yet to hear him say something useful to the people. He stood off meddling with doctor-patient relationship. He should stop it in Richard Gordon and Food and Drug Administration which is under his office from its job of monitoring the efficacy of food and medicine by giving it a bigger budget or letting it spend the funds that it earns. For example, the "food supplements" (subsidy) is getting away with murder because the FDA is falling in its job. The FDA claims it cannot test "food supplements" because they are not drugs. But those "supplements" are being marketed as drugs. While their advertisements say "no therapeutic claims," they are doing exactly that, claiming that this or that product aids in the fight against diabetes, hypertension and circulatory disease, but they don't have the tests and clinical studies to back up their claims and show the scientific reasoning their products. Unfortunately, where products are marketed by well-known people, and when they are in pill or tablet form, people think they are as good or better than the real medicine.

The many billboards, commercials and editorial comments these companies are buying can only mean that they are making a killing, so they can afford to buy them. The FDA should help the people by informing them about the efficacy of these alleged "food supplements." Duque should see to it that it does.

Karma

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

ARE TRULY IS TEMPTED TO THINK ABOUT it in terms of Julius Caesar, not least because dear de Venecia might as well have said to all his cowkigers in Congress: "Et tu, Brutus? Then fall Jose." But the only resemblance to Julius Caesar in the scene is the fantastic hatchet-job the congressmen of Malacañang carry out last Monday on the king, or self-declared king-maker in their tattered line of being, their long-time benefactor with the stakeholders lost on by Mother Erring.

And the depth of the betrayal. The worst of monopoly betrayal between the least Brutus could console himself with the thought he did that to his friend and patron to put an end to his unending ambition. The congressmen who voted to impeach JDV and put a stone hockey in his place had no excuse other than to help the incumbent occupant of Malacañang carry out her crushing ambition. To hear the congressmen's rationalizations last Monday, which droned on till the evening hour, one was not reminded of Brutus telling the world how cruel he was at his friend but because he was ambitious, "I love Jose," One was reminded only of a sycophant.

But that was all the resemblance there was to Julius Caesar. Unfortunately for him, JDV did not cut a tragic figure, merely a pathetic one. With furrowed brow, which gave him a most pained expression, then he invariably wears, he repeated, saying what could not be said about the ITE deal for the most that it was, he had been selling for a moral reversal, a moral revolution. For which he had been met with derision, not just by Malacañang officials, but by a skeptical public who said he wasn't the best person to indict a moral moment or revolution. Why on earth? Why can't a sinner do moral thing like that? "We are all sinners here," he said. Imagine that: Jesus Congress is doomed to never touch the cross nor into the gash of grace?

An unnerving premise, except that he never ran to prove it. Only he was not punished so. He was a sinner who wasn't quite ready to confess his sins and repent for them; he was a sinner who merely wanted to rain the love on me. He wished he'd never GMA-ized him re-

continued on page 13

A remarkable process

A NEW PIECE IS APPEARING ON THE WALLS OF Jesuit houses and institutions around the world. It is the face of Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, fourth elected superior general of the Society of Jesus. To us in the Philippines, it is not an unfamiliar face, although his unassuming manner makes it easy for him to blend with the crowd. It figured who on entering the Jesuits had opted to work in Japan, and had been director of the Tokyo Asian Pastoral Institute on the Ateneo de Manila campus, provincial superior of all Jesuits in Japan, and dean/president of the Jesuit Conference of East Asia and the Pacific, with offices against the Ateneo campus. We would pass each other frequently in a street there as he would make the long walk to and from class, from his office to his residency.

"Extraordinary" election seems a special moment for the Jesuits in the Philippines, the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Philippine Province, ironically, coinciding with the arrival of "grandmother" provinces of New York and Aragon. These 30 years have seen much growth and development and some great Jesuits, notably two who have recently gone to their rewards. Fr. Eduardo Bonoan, S.J., whose lively letters entitled Kumusta Ka? (How are you?) were a continuous source of information and solace who made the Scriptures relevant to many. A new generation is now being sent pastoring and challenges.

What is particularly interesting, however, is the process by which Fr. Nicolás was elected. Of the total of 227 Jesuits from around the world, provincials, superiors and elected delegates, save in Rome to receive the congregation, by reason of age, of Father Kolvenbach as superior general and to elect his successor. According to the Institute, the delegates were to "prepare and prepare themselves for this election among themselves. During this time it was forbidden to campaign for or against any individual; one could answer questions proposed to another delegate, but could not endeavor in formation or opinion among others. The emphasis was on listening to that other those four days, when the 217 delegates convened to cast their ballots with no nominations or narrowing of the field. Father Nicolás was elected on the second ballot.

In a letter to Jesuits of the New York Province, Fr. Jeff Chapman described the election process:

"After Mass we would gather one on one with a companion from some other part of the world to share our thoughts, visions and concerns about the universal Society. These dialogues were to be characterized by openness, discernment, honesty and charity. You would literally open yourself completely to another Jesuit and together try to find God's will for us. These dialogues would go on all day—even during lunch which we all shared together in the recreation room. We would talk

Would Melo be just a GMA deodorizer?

MORE THAN THE CRAMMING OF FACES (no pundit, systemic change is needed).

A lot of writers are optimistic about the appointment of former Justice Jose Melo as the new chairman of the Commission on Elections and look to the impending appointments of two new Comelec commissioners in the same positive light. They see serving their three appointments will signal the beginning of the return of integrity to the country's electoral system.

Will this truly happen? We in Bicolparoo might doubt it.

Will Jose or Kho prove us wrong?

The whole electoral system of our country is so corrupt and scarred by all sorts of shenanigans that elections in our country have almost always been considered a farce and not a true reflection of the sovereign will. It has the potential to destroy the administration as a result of the Hello Garci scandal in the 2004 polls and the Bribed "mega" in the 2007 senatorial elections. With changing faces in the Comelec make things better on them?

What is needed is a complete overhaul of the whole electoral system. The Comelec himself or just one aspect of the system. Senator Biebs should never as wrong by initially charging all those involved in the 2004 and 2007 polls instantly. We extend none. This will be a good first step but, as we said, not enough.

The corruption is so massive and the cleaning is so pervasive in the electoral process that Band-Aid solutions will not be sufficient to execute the coming 2010 polls' credibility. A total cleansing of the poll body is non-negotiable. The prosecution and punishment of those responsible for the past electronic anomalies should be the standalone agenda of Chairman Melo. He should prove that he is in the Comelec not to serve as Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's deodorizer.

—ERIC EBELL
spokesperson,
Bicolparoo, mayo pagsabi ko 'adbo

Sumilao farmers not motivated by greed

I WOULD LIKE TO REACT TO THE JAN. 27 column of Ramon Tulfo. He said that the non-acceptance by the Sumilao farmers of the offer of San Miguel Foods Inc. in exchange for the contested 144 hectares of land is now occupying too much time by power. He also noted that the farmers want—but were of land because SMFI had already developed.

Tulfo's allegations are really very disgusting. The farmers want the land because it is their ancestral land and the sole "resource" for their food today and tomorrow. City of Malaybalay or Bukidnon is their home.

I also disagree with Eduardo C. Abaya who suggested in his letter (Inquirer, 1/17/08) that the 10 Sumilao farmers be each paid the cash value there

because of the land because that was just the purpose of their 1,700-kilometer walk. Let's admit: for a farmer more precious to assure his future American of losing out of touch with the Sumilao farmers when he himself is the one doing it out of touch.

I hope that Tulfo and Abaya will realize that the Sumilao farmers truly like for Land. With for Justice are only to attain a land that rightfully belongs to them but also to show to the whole nation the noble behind the government's effort in promoting social justice.

—SUSANE M. PUGAL
community development worker,
Del Monte, Tukuyan,
Iguan del Sur

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Ayala and Makati Avenue, City of Makati or send a fax to (fax no. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph).

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

LETTERS

Greenpeace disputes Holcim's 'solution' to garbage problem

WE WERE SHOCKED AND OUTRAGED to see our organization used in Holcim's attempts to "greenwash" its polluting operations. (Holcim advertisement, p. 6, Inquirer, 1/27/08)

The ad touts Holcim's supposedly "cost-viable solution to the country's trash problem" and states the official in charge of its pollution waste-to-energy initiatives as a "Greenpeace advocate."

We would like to make it clear that Greenpeace neither supports nor endorses Holcim, much less the waste-to-energy incinerator facility that it seeks to pass off as environmentally sound.

Greenpeace supports the first option: waste minimization, and was one of the first non-commercial groups to campaign against this dangerous and polluting practice.

Holcim's cement kiln, which burns used tires, solid wastes and industrial sludge, is clearly an incinerator, and could give rise to a variety of toxic emissions, including cancer-causing substances. Its claims, therefore, that the "co-processing" of waste materials "helps in the prevention of the environment" is pure hogwash.

But incidental, prompt was Holcim have been campaigning against Holcim to put a stop to its dangerous methods. In the Philippines, Greenpeace works alongside groups such as the Ecowaste Coalition and the Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance (GAIA) in working to expose incinerators and incinerator-in-disguise, such as Holcim's Antipo, which openly flout the Clean Air Act.

—JON ERIK SAMOL
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Greenpeace Southeast Asia,
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'Batibot' original creator sets record straight

"A IAB AT TELLERS WAS DYING writer's last literary gasp" (Inquirer, 12/8/07) sees Rene Villanueva as the "sacred winning writer of 'Batibot,'" the Filipino "Sesame Street."

"Batibot" was the title of two children's stage plays I wrote. There were produced way long before the Filipino TV production "Batibot" came out.

I dared an opera once, titled Villanueva's death, even as I staunchly confide with the bereaved family.

My first "Batibot" (1979)—an adaptation of the Rene Villanueva theme—was commissioned and produced by the Organization of Non-Academic Personnel of UP Prof. Antonio Malvar directed it and UP Integrated School students performed it at the UP Asian Labor Center.

My second "Batibot"—a musical about a lame boy with dreams of going to the Big City, inspired by various experiences I had with farmers and their families in my high school days—was produced by the Manila Metropolitan Theater. Tanglisang Bayanan Serye 1979. Bobi Cervantes directed it. Ruben Federico of the UP College of Music was the musical composer and conductor. Regi dela Cruz, Bambet's father; Dirbelia Velasco, Bambet's kid sister (she was discovered here by showbiz); Shiggia Cobarrubias, "Tatinday," Bambet's grandmother; Rhoda Ortega, Bambet's mother; Tony Cuesta-Rogers, Bambet's grandmother—regrettably with a host of other cast who played under in famous beings (such as Gina Alajar) as co-hosts and other animals. Boy Abunda was part of the stage management crew headed by Miss Cervantes and Daisy Dan Pecson.

My play was chosen together with some others as part of the inaugural presentations of the Met.

"Batibot" was well published (e.g., Bannawag, Who), went to extended run, and reviewed—favorably, in general, except by Villanueva.

Late 1994 or early 1995, Villanueva called me "from paradise" by Batibot me." Though I said no, a TV production crew came out in 1996 titled "Batibot" as those a rather rich mother for the source of the title and for the concept of talking, singing, and showing animals.

I went to the production office with a letter received by a certain Winifred Guevara, on Feb. 13, 1995, hoping for a dialogue with the producer. Instead, another staff who happened to be a friend of mine, came out apologetically. "Sory, matutugal na daw kayo."

My letter signaled for recognition and compensation for the use of "Batibot" but There was received acceptance to that day.

My older children who were only 3 and 2 years old when the TV production ran several months could not even believe that the title concepts and stage plays of the original "Batibot" productions were their father's, even as they looked at my "Batibot" poster. Of course, they have grown now and needs more friends.

—ROET C. PIPIL
banger_kalibasan@yahoo.net

War launched on lies made more heartrending because of lives lost

I WANT TO REACT TO THE HERO report about a study that says US President George W. Bush and other top officials of the US government told 935 lies about the Iraq war. (Inquirer, 1/28/08)

The Digital Times attached this damning that the latter possessed and was continuously producing weapons of mass destruction. But spell now, an evidence has been found to prove this allegation.

If the study says, one to be correct and true, then, joining the United States-taken or snatched Iraq was a big mistake. What makes it more disheartening is that many lives were lost and millions of dollars worth of property were destroyed in a war that was launched on the false assumption and lies of a few.

Guessing that the study's findings are correct and true, what could be the motive, if any, on the part of Bush and his officials in making up those lies? Did they garner those lies with a clear conscience, believing that their concoctions were true? Or were those intentional lies, manufactured to cover the interests of the United States—e.g., to take control of Iraq's oil reserves? In her view, they led us into believing their false statements—a lie is still a lie. They should have been very careful with their words and more so, with their actions.

But we should not cry over spilt milk. Whether the lies were innocent or intentional, the damage has been done.

—GERALD PETER CORTEJO,
gerald_cortes@yahoo.com

Obama narrows Clinton lead

From page A1

tional and individual state polls.

Neither Democratic candidate is expected to emerge from Super Tuesday as the presumptive nominee. Clinton and Obama each hope to win the majority of delegates at stake and claim front-runner status heading into the next rounds of state primaries and caucuses.

Unprecedented adspend

With so many states casting votes, Democrats have been spending unprecedented amounts of money on television advertising in recent days. Clinton and Obama each poured more than $1 million a day into TV ads in the last week, Clinton.

Clinton turned up the heat on Monday night, buying an hour of time on the cable television Hallmark Channel to televise a town hall meeting from New York to the Super Tuesday states. With husband Bill and daughter Chelsea on hand, Clinton fielded calls from voters beamed in from far-flung locales.

Obama campaigned with Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy and his niece, Caroline Kennedy, in Worcester, Mass., the home of the Clintons, who played one of the biggest upsets in Super Bowl history, defeating the previously undefeated Patriots on Sunday in what is now a Democratic stronghold.

"Tomorrow the underdog pulls it out," Obama said. "We don't always believe that the possible and progressive stories."

Want area, high stakes

The electoral territory was vast and at once the stakes. Running his Republican bid on the line, logged more than 8,000 kilometers in a 37-hour zoom to coast dash as he tried to win a big delegate haul wrapping up the nomination.

McCain led by double-digits in national polls, but some surveys showed Romney gaining ground in delegate-rich California.

"I think you're going to see a galloping crescendo of Republican conservatives getting behind my candidacy" the former Massachusetts governor said. But he conceded: "Right now that hasn't entirely happened."

McCain struggled to close the rule with his party's conservative base after entering strikingly far without its solid support in a remarkable comeback for a candidate whose hopes appeared dashed just months ago.

"I will preserve my pursuit conservative Republican credentials" while extending a practical hand to Democrats, McCain promised.

Right's mistrust of McCain

Romney sought until the end to exploit the Right's mistrust of McCain, a veteran Arizona senator who opposed President George W. Bush's tax cuts when they were introduced, advocated a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, favored mandates to stem global warming and led campaign finance reform efforts that Republican foes believe choke off free speech rights.

McCain struck back on Monday with a television ad that showed Romney in a 1999 Senate campaign debate against Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, saying he was "not to be dependent during the time of Reagan-Bush. I'm not trying to return to Reagan-Bush."

Romney campaigned from Tennessee to California on the eve of the voting, only to race back to attend Pope Virginia's Republican state convention on Tuesday. McCain, Obama and Clinton held rallies in the Northeast.

Huckabee

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, an ordained Baptist minister, launches in the South, where he enjoys support from Christian conservatives.

McCain could finish first in several Southern and border states—Alabama, Georgia, Oklahoma, Tennessee—and Huckabee and Romney splitting the conservative vote.

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani's decision to quit the race and endorse McCain after Florida's primary has given the Arizona senator a boost in North Carolina, Missouri and Tennessee states where there are many veterans in Republican ranks.

McCain, a former Vietnam prisoner of war who has campaigned on his national security experience, would be a formidable rival for either Obama or Clinton because of his appeal to independents.

Democratic prospects of winning the White House are high, given Americans' dissatisfaction with President George W. Bush and his handling of the economy and the Iraq war.

Delegate tally

The contests in two dozen states on Tuesday are delivering 1,023 Republican and 1,081 Democratic delegates. The number needed to win the nomination—1,191 for Republicans and 2,020 Democrats—is hit, the 37 pro-Clinton's delegate tally at 282 while Obama has 195. Among Republicans, McCain has 102 delegates while Romney has 93.

Former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards' departure after South Carolina's primary simplified the math but little else on the Democratic side.

Most winning that state, Obama has collected a succession of major endorsements—including seven members of the Kennedy family—and pulled into a statistical tie with Clinton in a national poll and in California, Tuesday's biggest prize with 370 Democratic delegates.

Campaigning for history

The two were campaigning for history as well—Clinton seeking to become the first female president, Obama the first black man elected to that post.

Unlike opponents Clinton and Obama are most issues, including national health coverage, ending US military involvement in Iraq and training taxes on the rich.

Instead, the campaign has focused on her experience and his visions of change, debated intensely but with little civility in the latest round than when former President Clinton, purportedly at rest, brought racial sensitivities to the surface in stumping for his wife. AP

Closely watched races on Super Tuesday

AMONG THE MOST CLOSELY watched races:

- In Georgia, where Obama made up ground against longtime poll leader Clinton, and Romney led for an upset. McCain planned to campaign there Tuesday after a meeting talk at Rockefeller Center in New York.
- State election officials said at least 3 million California already had voted, via mail-in ballot, out of 13.5 million ballots issued. They predicted that almost 5 million of the remaining ballots would be cast on Tuesday. Mail-in ballots are the last to be counted, increasing the odds of protracted suspense in the West.
- Missouri: A toss-up in battleground.
- New York: Clinton's secretary as senator, but Illinois Senator Obama did not concede it.
- New Jersey: Another state where the Democratic race tightened.
- New Mexico and Arizona: Along with California, states with large Hispanic populations, which is close Democrat Gen Clark's background.
- Connecticut: A Democratic battleground.

3-way toss-up

Georgia is considered a three-way toss-up among McCain, Romney and Huckabee.

McCain is favored in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware and his home state of Arizona, with 251 delegates combined. Romney, who would be his first Mormon president, hopes to connect with voters in Utah, where the Mormon church is based, and West Virginia, as well as to a string of caucuses in Western and Midwestern states.

Overseas voting

Largely overlooked in the chaos of the campaign was the opening of voting for Democrats living overseas in more than 50 countries. The first ballots in pink delegates were cast in Indonesia, where Obama fared as solidly.

JDV: Ready to help Comelec investigate 2004 election fraud

From page A1

Congress on Monday just before his colleagues voted to oust him. He had said he knew of instances of fraud committed during the 2004 polls which President Macapagal Arroyo's critics say she rigged.

Yesterday Dr. Venecia told the Inquirer he wanted to go over his notes "to make sure the things I say are true and relevant and will contribute in giving an end and closure to the Hello Garci' episode."

The opposition has scandalously said wiretapped telephone conversation put purportedly between Mrs. Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano were evidence she stole the 2004 vote. She has denied any wrongdoing.

Opposition anti leftist groups urged Dr. Venecia to refute parts of his claims.

Makati City Mayor Jejomar Binay, president of the United Opposition, said UNO was interested in what Dr. Venecia knows "and is responsible in the 2004 balloting."

"If he has something new to add, some new evidence, first probably we will be closer to resolving the issue of the legitimacy [of the Arroyo presidency]," Binay said.

"The Comelec must now make sure its vote to expose the corruption and rottenness of the Arroyo regime," said Renato Reyes, secretary general of the leftist Bagong Alyansang Makabayan. "The Arroyo mafia must be made accountable. That's the only way Dr. Venecia can redeem himself."

CBCP call

Last week, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines urged a "cleanse" in the wiretapping scandal.

But Comelec spokesperson James Jimenez, said in an interview yesterday that Dr. Venecia in his privilege speech referred to "attempts to rig" the 2004 polls and not contaminated electoral fraud.

He said the Comelec would not dignify Dr. Venecia's allegations since what the former Speaker described was mere "attempts."

Nevertheless, if Dr. Venecia gave other details of the alleged fraud, he said the Comelec was prepared to investigate and punish those who would be found responsible.

"I have no beef with something in his allegations then we deal with that. But for now we should stick to what he said," Jimenez said.

He said that if Dr. Venecia was indeed referring to actual electoral fraud committed in 2004, he could have easily said so on Monday when he appeared to be "unburdening" himself about everything he knew to Congress and the national audience watching the goings-on in the House.

"If he knew electoral fraud really happened, he would have said so. But no, he just said there were 'attempts to rig,'" Jimenez said.

Transco case

Just before administration lawmakers voted to remove Dr. Venecia as House Speaker, Dr. Venecia also denounced "corruption and double-cross" in the Arroyo administration citing among other things, the award to a group with supposed links to a Malaysian mafia of the right to operate the assets of National Transmission Corp. (Transco).

Speaking yesterday at the energy summit, President Arroyo defended the Transco deal, saying the group winning that in all of the government's privatization transactions, "even the losing bidders congratulated us on the transparency," with reports from DJ Yap, Beverly T. Remollo and Michael Lim Ubac

CNN JARGONBUSTER

From page A1

• DELEGATE: A delegate to a person who is generally empowered to represent a larger group in their support for a presidential candidate. Individual delegates are elected to a majority of ways depending on the state and the political party within the state.

Typically within a state, they can either committed in a "winner take-all" situation or split the delegates according to the state's congressional districts.

To get the Democratic nomination, a candidate must get 2,305 delegates, while the magic number for Republicans is 1,191.

• POPULAR VOTE: A candidate gets the popular vote by winning the most votes on Election Day.

Magic number: 270

• ELECTORAL COLLEGE: Established in 1804, the Electoral College consists of 538 citizens or "electors" in proportional numbers to the population of the 50 states.

These electors meet 41 days after the popular vote on Election Day to cast their votes for president and generally vote in accordance with their state's popular vote. A candidate needs at least 270 electoral votes to be elected as US President.

• SUPER TUESDAY: Super Tuesday commonly refers to a Tuesday in February or March of a presidential election year when the greatest number of states hold their primary elections to select delegates to the national convention of the two major political parties. This year 22 states are holding primary elections.

• RED STATE VS BLUE STATE: A red state refers to a state whose residents predominantly vote for the Republican candidate in elections. Conversely, a blue state refers to a state whose residents predominantly vote for the Democratic party presidential candidate.

• GOP: GOP stands for Grand Old Party and it is an old nickname for the Republican Party.

Bush salary: $400,000

• 10 things you never knew about US presidents

1. George Washington's salary as president was $25,000—George W. Bush's salary is $400,000.

2. Theodore Roosevelt became the first president awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906.

3. George W. Bush is the 43rd president, but there actually have only been 42 presidents. Cleveland was elected for two nonconsecutive terms and is counted twice, as the United States' 22nd and 24th president.

4. The oldest president ever elected was Ronald Reagan (1981-89). The 40th president took office at the age of 69.

5. Twenty-six presidents were lawyers before taking office.

6. Andrew Jackson was the first president to survive an assassination attempt.

One-day president

7. Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09) was the youngest president to ever serve who was elected vice president on a ticket with President William McKinley. In September 1900, a deranged anarchist shot McKinley twice in Buffalo, New York, and Roosevelt assumed the top office at 42.

8. Bill Clinton was the first Democratic president to win reelection since Franklin D. Roosevelt.

9. The first and only president for a day was David Atchison. Zachary Taylor was a staunch Episcopalian and refused to be sworn in on a Sunday.

10. James Madison was president when the British entered Washington and set fire to the White House during the War of 1812. CNN

(Tune in to CNN on Thursday, Feb. 5, for live coverage of Super Tuesday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Manila time. More details at www.cnn.com/newsroom)

Lent starts today; think ashes, stardust

From page A1

sinful desire for sins against not only their fellow human beings but also against nature, the planet Earth and the universe.

Quoting Genesis 3:19 ["Remember that you are but dust and unto dust you shall return"], Ash Wednesday reminds Catholics "to keep and enter humble remorseful soul" of the traditional reminder on Ash Wednesday, when the foreheads of the faithful are marked with ash.

Christ turned his attention to the Pharisees' feelings," the homilist Redemptorist priest who taught in Davao in the 1970s says the modern mind needs to be reminded in the cosmic whole.

"We are made of matches," Kelly writes. "Our bodies are distillations of the cosmic matter and energies that make up the physical universe over the billions of years of its existence. We are embodied in a cosmic reality."

Renewal of vows

Indeed, stardust and ashes are not necessarily chemically distinct. How theology and creation spirituality of the cosmic Christ unfolds as adults with biblical fashion.

In his own articles, Fr Gerard Diwa, head of the Ministry of Liturgical Affairs of the Manila Archdiocese, says the Catholic Church's observance of Ash Wednesday originated from a ceremony intensified in place of adult baptism.

As infant baptism became the norm, the celebration of Lent—and in particular the observance of Ash Wednesday—provided the occasion for Christians to renew the baptismal vows that were made for them as infants.

"The visible season of Lent is to fast geared toward the renewal of baptismal vows in gratitude's invitation or entrance into Christian life," Diwa says.

"Thus, when Catholics hear the sign of the cross marked in ashes on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday, the ashes symbolically dusting to the consecratory that they have sinned, and that now they are ready to repair whatever damage they have done to their relationship with God and with others," he says.

Ash is also used as a symbol to highlight the penitential essence of this Lenten celebration, according to Diwa.

The practice recalls a ceremony held from the 1st to the 6th centuries when the bishop gathered "public sinners" at the door of the cathedral, where their names were listed in a "book of sinners."

After the public confessions, the bishop prescribed penance to the sinners, prayed over them, and then smeared ash on each of them.

Diwa says another significant point to the celebration of Ash Wednesday is the origin of the ash—it comes from palm fronds used in the previous year's Palm Sunday celebration.

"This signifies the desire of Christians to follow Christ through the Paschal journey, all the way to Christ's resurrection," Diwa says. Father Sanchez when the palms are fresh and green, so when they begin to wither and dry up," he says.

Fasting, abstinence

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are the two days of the year when Catholics aged 18 to 59 are obliged to fast and abstain from eating meat, not merely as acts of penance or self-denial, but as ways to strengthen their will.

But fasting and doing penance during Lent are not merely for personal sanctification. It also has a social dimension as Yahweh reminded: "Free the bonds of injustice, undo the knots of the yoke, let the oppressed free" (Isaiah 58:6).

This year, the eve of the Chinese Lunar New Year coincides with Ash Wednesday. But the Archdiocese of Manila community will still be able to celebrate the Rite of the Ash with traditional festivities.

Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales noted in a circular here the Chinese New Year "is a very important occasion for our Chinese and Chinese-Filipino brothers and sisters."

"In the spirit of pastoral solicitude, I hereby grant dispensation from the rule that the faithful in our Catholic Chinese and Chinese-Filipino brothers and sisters in the Archdiocese of Manila on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 8, 2006," Rosales said.

Those granted the dispensation are supposed to observe fasting and abstinence on Feb. 8, the first Friday of Lent, he added.

According to Diwa, Msgr. Rosales has that for the Chinese and Chinese Filipino community brought the dispensation in behalf of the group, whose members are family oriented in Binondo, Manila.

"We [granted the dispensation] because we also respect their cultural celebration," Diwa pointed out, said the liturgist, adding that the dispensation also covered the non-Chinese attending the Chinese festivities today.

INQUIRER INFOGRAPHICS

The road to the White House

GETTING NOMINATED as the presidential candidate of either the Democratic or Republican party to the United States is no easy task. The prospective standard bearers have to endure months of tough campaigning that basically revolves around presidential election primaries and caucuses.

Primaries and caucuses are not different methods of accomplishing the same basic thing. Simply put, they are both a means for each political party to let voters nationwide select their party's presidential nominee.

More specifically, primaries and caucuses are means of selecting delegates to send to the party's national convention to finally select who their presidential candidate will be.

These political exercises are held only for months, with the hottest contests on the jump-off point. It was followed by primaries and caucuses in Wyoming, New Hampshire, Michigan, Nevada, South Carolina and Florida. The biggest and most important, however, is the so-called "Super Tuesday" which is being held today (Feb. 5 in the US). On this day, 24 states will conduct their votes, including California and New York which carry big numbers of delegates.

Here's the scorecard so far of the people vying to become the president and nominee of the Democratic and Republican parties and how the results of the "Super Tuesday" will affect their chances.

Democratic race results so far — Magic number: 2,025

232 Clinton	158 Obama	26 Edwards

Republican race results so far — Magic No.: 1,191

97 McCain	92 Romney	29 Huckabee

There are currently 4,049 total delegates to the Democratic National Convention. The total number of delegate votes needed to win the nomination is 2,025. There are currently 2,380 total delegates to the Republican National Convention. The total number of delegate votes needed to win the nomination is 1,191.

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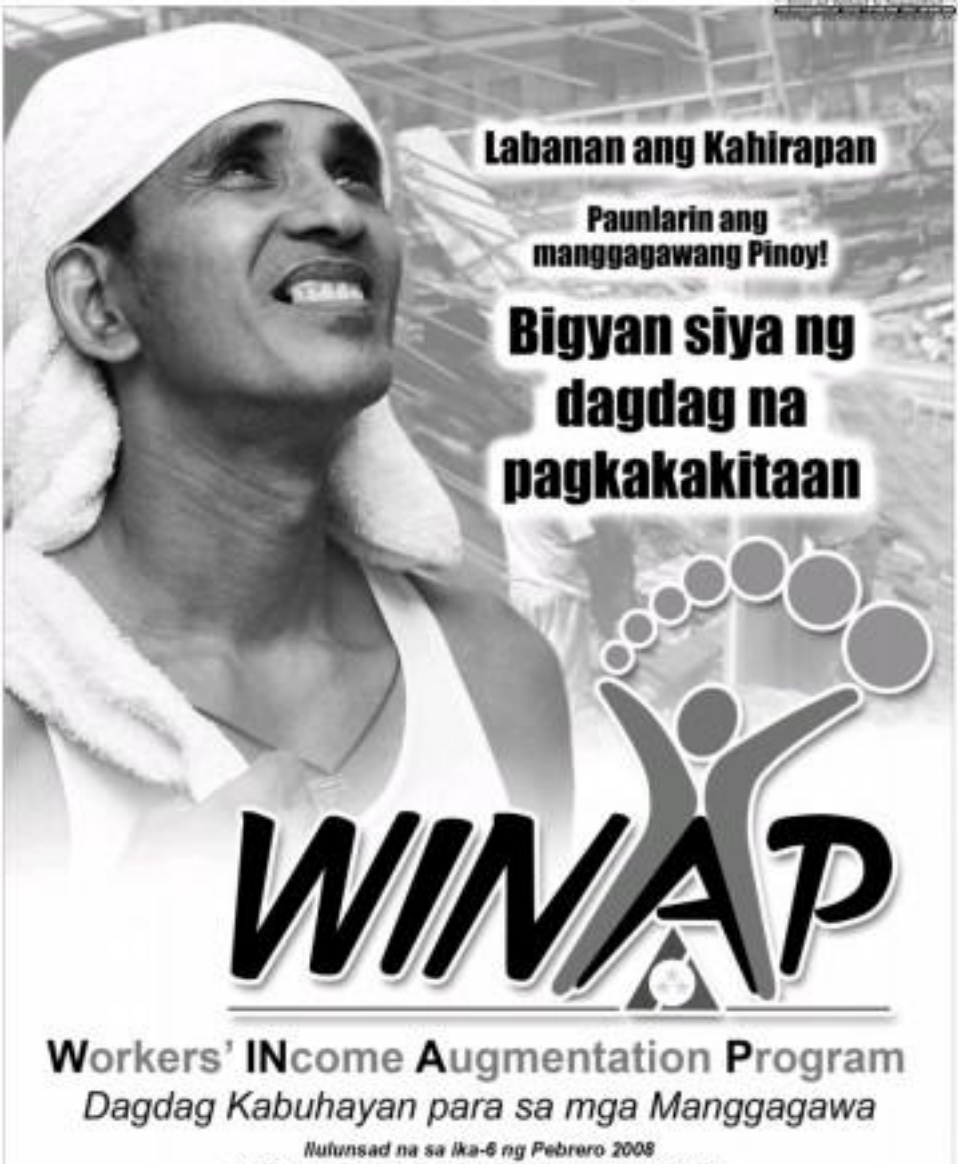

Workers' INcome Augmentation Program

Dagdag Kabuhayan para sa mga Manggagawa

Ilulunsad na sa ika-6 ng Pebrero 2008
sa Occupational Safety & Health Center, Quezon City

Ang ***Dagdag Kabuhayan Para sa mga Manggagawa*** o ang **Workers Income Augmentation Program (WINAP)** ay isang programa ni Pangulong Gloria Macapagal- Arroyo na magbibigay ng oportunidad sa mga manggagawa at sa kanilang pamilya na magkaroon ng karagdagang kita sa pamamagitan ng pagnenegosyo at iba pang proyektong pangkabuhayan sa tulong ng Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) .

Sino-sino ang maaaring sumali?

Ang WIN AP ay bukas sa mga manggagawang nagnanais madagdagan ang kanilang kita. Ipagkakaloob din ito sa mga overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) na may mababang sahod at apektado ng paglaas ng piso, at sa mga manggagawa sa impormal na sektor.

Paano makakasali?

Magsadya sa pinakamalapit na DOLE Regional o Field Office ang sinumang indibidwal o grupo ng mga manggagawa na interesadong makilahok.

Mga Serbisyo

• Business Planning •Business Management
•Production Skills Training •Financial Assistance

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
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Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Smuggled Cebu cars bore Manila plates

CEBU CITY—SMUGGLED CARS THAT HAVE BEEN REGISTERED here and in Toledo City bore license plates from Metro Manila, indicating that the collusion between smugglers, customs and transportation officials is far more extensive than previously thought, a leader of a leftist group serving as antigraft watchdog said.

Armand Perez, Bayan Muna secretary general for Central Visayas, said his group submitted documents to the House declaring that the license numbers of at least 40 smuggled luxury cars that were registered in the city and Toledo City emanated from Metro Manila.

These cars include BMWs, Mercedes Benzes and Porsches that were registered by the Land Transportation Office from August 2006 to July 2007 in the cities of Cebu, Toledo and Naga—despite the absence of car queuing on their supposedly first-papers.

Perez said the documents, which Bayan Muna obtained from the LTO central office, showed that the cars, while registered in Central Visayas, bore license plate numbers that started with the letter "E," which was assigned to Metro Manila.

The numbers assigned to Central Visayas start with "G" and "J," Perez said.

He said his group believed that these cars were smuggled.

Under an LTO memorandum, license plates should be issued and released by the same district office where the vehicles are originally registered, Perez said.

He said LTO officials in Central Visayas and Metro Manila "collaborated in causing the issuance and release of NCR (National Capital Region)-assigned plates" to the smuggled cars. "This way, they could mislead traffic enforcers into believing that these cars were registered in Metro Manila, not in Cebu," he said.

Perez said he hoped the House committee on good governance would look into the documents as investigating the smuggling of cars in Cebu.

The Presidential Anti-Smuggling Group in the Visayas also asked the LTO regional office to look into 67 luxury cars believed to have been smuggled through Cebu.

Vicente Galvez, LTO regional operations chief and legal officer, said the agency was studying the records of the cars. Two, he said, had no records at the LTO office.

Raul Aquilon, LTO regional director, said his office would investigate Bayan Muna's allegation. Jolanta R. Bakomboi, *Inquirer Visayas*

DUCK RACE
Participants try to push their ducks to score in one in a race during the Bun-Ehen Festival in Candaba, Pampanga. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ...)

Farmers told not to be afraid of rats

RACERO, CITY—A CHINESE Filipino doctor here said farmers should not be afraid of rats when there rest their fields because rodents, entombed pests by many, will bring them back.

"In the West, rats are considered pests, but in Chinese belief, rats are believed to bring good luck to livelihoods," said Dr. Charles Chong, a member of the Association for Philippine-China Understanding's Bayanin chapter, in a chat not celebrating the Chinese New Year here.

Chong said Chinese farmers did not fear rats because these were believed to usher in prosperity.

Messenger of prosperity

According to Chinese belief, the rat is considered an ancient messenger of prosperity. It is the first of the 12-year cycle of animals that appear in the Chinese zodiac.

The Chinese have year on Feb. 7 will welcome the Year of the Earth Rat.

Lolita Ramirez, Bongurat agriculturist, said rats could be considered symbols of good luck as long as they did not destroy crops.

She said the only way of preventing rats from threatening farms was to maintain a balanced ecosystem.

She said the only reason rats attack farms was the imbalance in the ecosystem. She cited *kalaguit* (dark-and-lean) farming as one practice that destroys the ecosystem.

"Rats eat wild fruits in the mountains. Farmlands only experience real infestation if their natural habitats are destroyed," she said.

She said Bongurat farms had not experienced rat infestation in years, except in the 1960s when endemic unrolled some rice farms and cornfields were pested phenomenon in the province.

"But in this Year of the Rat, hopefully, rats will bring good luck to the farmers' crops. We never considered rats as problems," she said.

If there is one thing that Bongurat farmers have to worry about, it is the infestation of locusts that are responsible for gross in many parts of the province. *Berdner Cadano, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Army to recruit 100 men for East Visayas

By Jaop A. Gobien
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE ARMY plans to recruit over 100 more soldiers in Eastern Visayas in a bid to meet a self-imposed deadline to crush communist rebellion by the time President Macapagal-Arroyo's term ends in 2010.

The 8th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army will deploy at least 150 of these new soldiers to different battalions in the region, said Gen. Alfredo Bagnate, deputy commanding general of the 8th ID.

"These new members of the division will help boost our strength," Bagnate said.

There are currently more than 5,000 soldiers in the region assigned to three brigades and nine battalions. The 8th ID is under the command of Maj. Gen. Armando Camenforte.

Bagnate said the recruitment of new soldiers was still ongoing.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines has announced the recruitment of 7,000 more soldiers nationwide to fight communist insurgents. Mr. Arroyo has directed the military to end the communist rebellion by 2010.

Bagnate blamed rebels in Eastern Visayas for its poverty.

But while the Army was recruiting more soldiers, he said the number of guerrillas had dwindled and could no longer fight effectively.

In December last year, at least 100 rebel members attacked a police station in Wandingan, Samar, killing a civilian.

No water in Cavite towns for 2 days

SOME AREAS OF Imus and Noveleta, Cavite will have no water for 12 hours starting 11 p.m. today, Feb. 6, until 11 a.m. tomorrow, Feb. 7, according to a notice to users of the Dasmariñas Water System (DWS).

The water service interruption will give rise to the replacement of pipes along Tirona Highway sector Gregorio, Cavite City.

The areas that will have no water for 12 hours are the following:

In Imus: Bayan, piso Matchin, Pinkan, Robleza, Colnab, Malinta 1, 2 and 3, Buhay, Bucandala 1 and 2, Anabu 1-A, Anabu 2-A, Anabu 2-B, Alapan 1-A, Alapan 1-B, Alapan 2-A, Alapan 2-B, Tanzang Luma, Toclong, Pasong Buhay, Tanzang Luma 1, Tanzang Luma 2, Tanzang Luma 3, Tanzang Luma 4, Tanzang Luma 5, Tanzang Luma 6, Tanzang Luma 7, Tanzang Luma 8, Tanzang Luma 9, Tanzang Luma 10, Tanzang Luma 11, Tanzang Luma 12, Tanzang Luma 13, Tanzang Luma

INQUIRER Northern Luzon

When learning marine conservation is fun

Students are trained on sustainable use of marine resources, food from the sea and importance of marine animals

By Yolanda Sarmiento Pamintuan
Aniday, Pangasinan

ON ANDA ISLAND AND IN OTHER towns facing the Lingayen Gulf in Pangasinan, people start to learn conservation and management of the already critical marine resources in their areas at an early age.

Localized issues, or those involving the resources of the towns, are discussed in classrooms. Both students and teachers enjoy the lessons integrated in Science and Health (Grade 6) and Science and Technology (first year high school).

"It's FUN," said Carole de Leon, a teacher of the Dasoy Biotic National High School (on Sual, during a recent visit of Fisheries Secretary, usually) representative of the United Nations Development Program.

Behind sustained the projects implementation of the Single Lingayen Gulf Project (SLGP) of the Fisheries Department, Bureau of Fisheries, which is based in the University of the Philippines' Marine Science Institute.

One of the projects is the Localization and Integration of Coastal Resources Management Education in the Basic Education Curriculum (LICRMEBEC) of the Department of Education.

"We want to catch (the) children (while they are still) young in ... teaching them (about marine resources). The results (effect) will be immediately apparent in investing (also) time. But (we have to invest) now," Bobis said.

Although the students live in a coastal town (cradled by the Lingayen Gulf and South China Sea, they hardly understood the marine environment, De Leon said. She brought her students to mangrove forests and fish cage areas so they could better grasp the ideas they were discussing.

"They asked (lot of questions. They) wanted to know why there are fish cages in (supposedly) seas, which they learned to be feeding places for fish and mollusks. They also wanted to know if the fish cages will not affect the water quality in fish culture areas," De Leon said.

Cecille Villareal, principal of the Tuldalgeon Elementary School in Bolinao, said it was good that the schools were made to participate in coastal resources management.

"I tell the students to begin with themselves and to tell their families that some practices, like illegal fishing, are not good to the environment," she said.

Local issues

Bhayia Biotic Public and the subjects could be related to local issues.

In one village in Sinilo, fishermen use an compressors so they can stay underwater for a longer time to catch high-value fish, like the red lapu-lapu (grouper), using cyanide, he said. Cyanide fishing destroys marine resources and endangers the fishermen's lives, he added.

The SLGP decided to embark on integrating coastal resource management education in the DepEd curriculum so it can train future stewards of coastal resources.

In a papers, it said resource-related education (and to focus on the community and targeted the most immediate resource users—the fishermen and their families.

"The campaign reached out to the younger set of audience expected to carry out the advocacy into the next generations. Moreover, because of the integrated nature of these campaigns, much of the impacts are lost beyond the campaign," it said.

"By working through the formal and well-school system of the primary and secondary schools, it is expected that an unbroken chain of future stewards of coastal resources will be more systematically targeted."

Not new

The project, started three years ago, is "not a new thing," said Tess Bisco of the 5600 Oldest groups had done it, like the defunct Lingayen Gulf Coastal Management Committee under the Office of the President, she said.

The difference, however, is that the issues discussed in the LICRMEBEC have been localized and fitted to address the needs of the areas where the subject is taught, Bisco said.

The project is now being implemented in 28 elementary and high schools, involving more than 40 teachers and 4,000 students. It has been "legitimized" by the three schools divisions in western Pangasinan and La Union, and strongly supported by the municipalities.

"Based on the reviews of past and current related initiatives, it appears that this project is the furthest yet coastal resource education has gone to date," the SLGP paper said.

And what do students learn?

For one, the Philippines is one of the centers of marine biodiversity in the world and is also one of the most threatened. Students are exposed to ecologically critical coastal ecosystems and are briefed on the causes of degradation of fishery resources.

They are also trained on the sustainable use of marine resources, food from the sea and importance of marine animals. Fish culture, aquarium and near-shore fishing, and laws on fishery and aquatic resources are among the lessons.

Lessons in the past were written by members of the Integrated Professional Development and Technical Enhancement, with inputs from teachers who were trained for the subjects. The resource speakers in the first classes were and five high schools in Alaminos City, Anda, Bolinao, Sual and Lingayen towns in Pangasinan, and in San Fernando City in La Union.

There were improved from feedbacks on the pilot implementation.

Technical assistance from the SLGP helped to further localize the concepts by using Lingayen Gulf as primary example.

PARTICIPANTS in the council's search collection Clinking visit the mangrove areas of Barangay San Miguel in Sual, Pangasinan.

Cordillerans start keeping records of their own stories

By Vincent Cabreza
Baguio City

THIS IS THE DECADE OF centennial celebrations for a city that grew out of the American colonization of the Philippines.

Beginning in 2002 with the 100th anniversary of Benguet Province, it has continued this year with the "Students' Camp" centennial in April, and will culminate in the centennial of Baguio City in 2009.

What binds these independent events is the shared history of the Cordilleras.

Last month, historian Henry Fry, author of the "History of the Mountain Province," and Cordillera historian Teresita Homeda-Pawid said official archives had a huge vacuum when dealing with documents released government to the Philippines shortly after it acquired the summers needed to the years preceding Philippine independence.

It is up to Cordillerans today to enact keeping records of their own stories, Pawid said.

The 88-year-old Fry and his 'Bobi' wife, Georgina Sipos, flew to the country to relaunch an updated volume of his book, which discusses how political differences between the US political parties affected US colonial rule in the Philippines, and how it had developed Baguio.

Fry said Republican conservatism brought education and public health care to the country, but the Republican government "strategized colonialism" who were more inclined to preserve what they had discovered in the Cordillera.

Democrat liberalism, on the other hand, had been concerned about bringing about Philippine independence and public unrest resulted in ambiguities in American policy regarding Philippine colonialism, Fry said.

Cordillerans who study history can move families with

HISTORIAN Henry Fry shows off his book.

one American episode that challenged Igorot prejudices—the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, where Igorot and other indigenous Filipino communities were put on display, Pawid said.

The Americans paid the Igorot people to join the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in a project when liberal thinkers in America, like author Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), had been critical of their country's colonial aspirations.

The World's Fair was the subject of a controversial movie released in 2004, but the Igorot people have not shared their experience with others in the country, Pawid said.

She said the Cordillera exposition policy even its revision in early 1900s to a "clear and open position," which could have been explained by official US documents, but research made by historians could no longer locate them.

Fry said he and his wife went to the US Library of Congress to collect yearbooks and documents written by "school teachers, and all sorts of people who lived or worked in the Philippines."

"I heard explosions of wealth (from my visit)," Fry said, when she helped him pore over these documents.

Georgina said she had discovered (from Americans on government spies) on Filipinos to learn about their reactions to US rule. Occasionally, she said, the colonial government relied on information supplied by women who are sent to their tech families to Manila boarding schools.

"I just worked with things I could find. I didn't had access to (documents) people here did not have. (But those were) not too exhaustive," Fry said.

Cordillera roots

The University of the Philippines Baguio is encouraging to work around the dearth in archival records. Its Cordillera Studies Center will hold on Feb. 7 "Conference on Cordillera Studies" to discuss studies that hopes to build a new historian town of materials about the history of the region and its people.

About 130 experts on indigenous peoples are attending the conference to exchange notes about their studies in the past.

The CSC fair also hosts a training interest in existing historical materials about the Cordillera. Last year, it produced a booklet of English translations of the late Jose Eudela de los Reyes' "El Trapiche," an 1890s account of the people's account of Abra's indigenous people.

Last week, the UP Press published "Cordillera in June," a collection of sociological and historical essays on the Cordillera, which was inspired by the anthropological work of UP professor emeritus June Prill-Brett.

The book's editor, retired sociology professor Ben Tupaoy, said Brett's work was "pioneered" because the agencies she taught to research about Cordillera culture and history were now being run by Cordillerans who spent their eight years there because, and when the Cordillera again embarks on the road to autonomy.

Pawid, a former UP professor, said the university produced a new Northern Luzon archive to benefit researchers, students and people interested in reviewing the region's history.

LANDBANK OFW Cash Card

The SMART way to send remittances

In response to Administrative Order (AO) No. 215, where President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo emphasized the need for the government to take strong and clear action that would benefit the millions of Filipinos working abroad, the country's official depository bank, Land Bank of the Philippines, in cooperation with the leading wireless services provider, Smart Communications, Inc. (SMART), unveiled the LANDBANK OFW Cash Card before the Filipino community leaders gathered at the Madinat Jumeirah Hotel in Dubai. The launch coincided with President Arroyo's visit to Dubai to lead an investment roadshow in the trade hub of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

The LANDBANK OFW Cash Card will enable Filipino workers, especially those based in the Middle East, to send remittances to their beneficiaries in the Philippines via SIM-based services anytime, anywhere at the speed of a text message and for as low as P5 in basic charges. Powered by Smart Money, the LANDBANK OFW Cash Card is an electronic debit card that is linked to a mobile phone with a SMART SIM. The cash card utilizes SMART's mobile financial services platform, Smart Services Hub.

Cheaper Remittance Fee

With the LANDBANK OFW Cash Card, Filipinos will still pay the variable remittance cost (which averages P330 per transaction) in the Middle East) charged by any accredited remittance company abroad but will incur a lower LANDBANK charge of P50 against the P200 bank charge via over-the-counter, generating savings of P141, or 74 percent cheaper, for the typical remittance.

The Filipino migrant worker is encouraged to load adequate funds into his LANDBANK OFW Cash Card to minimize paying the P230 remittance fee and P50 bank fee that is charged each time he loads money to the cash card. Once money has been loaded in the cash card, he can now use his mobile phone to make several fund transfers, with each transfer being charged only P5, to any of his beneficiaries in the Philippines, anytime and in the amounts required. Likewise, a reversing charge of P10 and a VAT fee of P2.00 is charged to the sender's airtime load per transfer.

With succeeding transactions, the OFW can save as much as 96 percent or P570 per fund transfer from his LANDBANK OFW Cash Card in the Middle East to any of his beneficiaries in the Philippines.

The OFW's Power of Choice

The LANDBANK OFW Cash Card gives the Global Filipino greater power—the power of choice to remit money, wherever they are, whenever they are and in whatever amounts.

The Filipino migrant worker will now be able to load airtime, send funds to beneficiaries in the Philippines, and even to pay for utilities, monthly membership contributions to the Social Security System or Pag-IBIG Fund, housing loan amortization and even tuition or their child's weekly allowance. A free SMS notification will be sent to both the OFW and beneficiary upon successful transfer of funds. Beneficiaries may withdraw proceeds of the remittance from over 1,000 ATMs nationwide.

Live Demonstration

The convenience and speed of the service was demonstrated via an actual fund transfer by Roberto B. Gatus, an OFW employed as a waiter in Dubai, who used his mobile phone to send funds to his sister, Rosenda, in the Philippines. Roberto has been an OFW for almost three years, sending money via the usual door-to-door remittance service for the daily needs of his wife and daughter, and for the regular medication of his father in the Philippines.

Rosenda, who has been looking after her father in the absence of Roberto, then successfully withdrew the proceeds of her brother's remittance from a Landbank ATM. The fund transfer and free SMS notifications to Roberto and Rosenda took less than a minute.

A Response to PGMA's Call

LANDBANK developed the mobile remittance service in partnership with SMART in response to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's AO 215 which directs LANDBANK to provide cheaper remittance services for OFWs. The service is not seen as a panacea of resources the government has designed to recognize the significant contributions and sacrifices of OFWs who have the brunt of the strong peso.

It is expected that the LANDBANK OFW Cash Card will sustain the influx of OFW remittances by providing migrant workers and a fast, efficient and cheaper fund transfer alternative that will give their beneficiaries access to a broader range of goods and services.

How to Apply:

A. Landbank OFW Cash Card

Starting March 2008, Filipinos abroad can go to any Philippine Embassy or Philippine Consulate Office with LANDBANK Overseas Representative Officers in the following countries: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait in the Middle East and Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan and South Korea in the Asia-Pacific region. The LANDBANK OFW cash card is also available in Italy, United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Los Angeles and San Francisco in the United States.

For those still in the Philippines, they may apply for a LANDBANK OFW Cash Card initially at selected LANDBANK branches, LANDBANK extension office at the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) office, selected Pre-departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) centers and the National Reintegration Center for OFWs in Intramuros, Manila.

B. Landbank Beneficiary Cash Card

The identified beneficiaries of OFWs in the Philippines will be asked to visit selected LANDBANK branches to process the issuance of free beneficiary cards.

SMART

LANDBANK

Aplus METRO

Editor Ester G. Dipasupil
E-mail: pi_metro@inquirer.com.ph

1 killed, 5 injured in 2 QC robberies

Cops say heists could be work of same syndicate

By Marlon Ramos

HEAVILY ARMED MEN CLAD IN POLICE AND MILITARY UNIforms stormed a bank in Quezon City just before noon yesterday, barely three hours after several men robbed a supermarket just a few kilometers away.

Both heists spurred the Quezon City Police District to send out dragnet operations to track down the suspects, who escaped with more than P1 million in cash and jewelry from the two establishments.

Police Senior Superintendent Leocadio Santiago Jr., QCPD director, said the suspects in the bank robbery were believed to be members of the same syndicate that hit the supermarket.

Police said the gunmen who robbed the Metrobank branch on Tandang Sora Avenue in Barangay Culiat at around 11:30 a.m. were dressed in police and military uniforms.

Police said the gunmen, who numbered at least five, entered the bank and announced a holdup. They then herded employees and customers into the vault and escaped with undisclosed amounts of money and jewelry.

Santiago said the suspects fled in two vehicles, a Mitsubishi Adventure and a Toyota Revo, which were found abandoned in Barangay Pasong Tamo, Quezon City, about 2 kilometers from the bank.

Police said the suspects in the supermarket robbery, which occurred at around 8:30 a.m., were also dressed in police and military uniforms.

Police said the gunmen entered the supermarket on Commonwealth Avenue in Barangay Batasan Hills, Quezon City, and announced a holdup. They then herded employees and customers into the vault and escaped with undisclosed amounts of money and jewelry.

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ANIMAL RIGHTS activists tried to get customers who buy the public to honor the Year of the Rat by not using glue traps, which kill their victims slowly.

Shun glue traps for rats, say animal rights activists

By Tina G. Santos

KEEPING ONE'S surroundings clean and using food properly are the most effective ways of getting rid of rats, not sticking to animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta).

In the middle of preparations for tomorrow's celebration of the Chinese New Year, Peta activists staged an awareness campaign yesterday at Quiapo Street in Sta. Cruz, Manila, and urged Filipinos to close the door on glue traps to get rid of rats.

"This is to raise awareness and correct bad information about rats," said Ashley Pinon, Peta's campaign officer. A Peta member wore a rat costume and held a sign that read, "Make it a year for rats, don't buy glue traps."

In the Chinese calendar, 2008 is the Year of the Rat.

"We're asking people to honor the Year of the Rat by leaving these cruel devices on the store shelves," Pinon said.

Glue traps consist of board pieces covered with a sticky substance designed to entrap small animals.

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We find ways

Police official gets jail term for using stolen SUV

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A QUEZON CITY JUDGE found a police official indicted at the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group guilty for using a recovered stolen sports utility vehicle for his personal use — effectively.

QC Regional Trial Court Judge Thelma Bunyi-Medina of Branch 104 the other day sentenced Supt. Aaron Fontalicio Reyes to a maximum prison term of six months up to a minimum of eight years and eight months for violating Presidential Decree 1612 or the antifencing law.

In her decision, Bunyi-Medina said the found Reyes to be in "constructive possession" of a stolen vehicle, a red Toyota Revo (WPH 627).

Missing

Court records showed that the car was reported missing by its owner, Joseph Wong, to the Traffic Management Group in Camp Crame on Nov. 11, 2000.

According to Wong, the Revo was stolen in front of his house on 33rd Mount Avenue in Quezon City. The car was later recovered in Pangasinan on April 15, 2001.

According to the judge, Reyes used the recovered vehicle in the police operations of his unit without Wong's knowledge and permission.

Furthermore, a merchants, told the TMG that the van had been left in his care by Reyes who asked him to repair the brakes.

Fontalicio stressed that the prosecution of fencing against Reyes is wrong because he had the vehicle repaired without first turning it over to its owner.

By having the vehicle with Fontalicio, the judge pointed out, she assumed "did not own the stolen vehicle as evidence which must be safely kept to preserve its integrity."

The van bore a different license plate when it was recovered by the TMG than existing Reyes's two, Fontalicio said.

She also gave no credence to his testimony that he had been authorized by his commanding officer then of the CIDG, Supt. Jonathan Ablang, to use the recovered vehicle for his operations because he could not prosecute a restless and homeless on the matter from Ablang.

Dubious

The judge likewise pointed out that Reyes's alibi was also dubious because his "police operations," for which he used the van, yielded no results.

'Rodriguez town can't tax garbage haulers'

By Kristine L. Alave

REAL, GOV. CASIMIRO YNARES III has warned a point over Rodriguez town Mayor Pedro Guevarra in their continuing feud over the control of two landfills in the area.

In a resolution dated Jan. 10, Antipolo Secretary Raul M. Bonifacio ruled that the town of Rodriguez cannot tax garbage haulers, adding that it is the provincial council that has the authority to review local ordinances.

Charging garbage haulers fees when entering the town's 14-hectare landfill has "resulted in the indirect imposition of taxes," not only on the local government units, but the national government as well, Gonzalez said.

Based on an ordinance passed by the town council last year, a tipping fee of P800 to P1,000 would be charged for every garbage truck that enters the landfill.

According to the Jenkin chief, imposing a fee on garbage trucks entering Rodriguez violated Sec. 133 of The Local Government Code which states that provinces, cities, municipalities and barangays should not extend "taxes, fees, or charges of any kind on the national government, its agencies and instrumentalities, and local government units."

Bonifacio also advised the provincial government when he said it can review the town ordinances and declare them null and void.

The local government should not interfere Consideration in stating that it has autonomy, saying the Charter only refers to decentralization and "does not make local government's sovereign within the state."

The provincial government, meanwhile, hailed the DOJ ruling. In a statement, it said the decision was a "victorious development" and underscored their past position on the dangerous issue.

Ynares, however, said he has filed an appeal in the DOJ. He noted that if Gonzalez's final ruling would prohibit them from charging garbage trucks that enter the landfills in the town, then they might as well close down the facilities.

The town has two landfills, one operated by the Rodriguez government and the other under the supervision of the Rizal provincial government. Both parties have accused each other of violating local and national laws.

IT WAS a busy day for the Quezon City police yesterday with the occurrence of two robberies — the first involving an armored van parked in front of a supermarket in Project 2 (left), followed by a bank heist on Timog Avenue.

1 killed, 5 injured in 2 QC robberies

From page A14

robbers fired their guns in all three directions as they fled the scene. Two were identified as Dexter Sagang and a certain Zaldy. The three others have yet to be named by the police.

"It would be possible that the robbery in Aurora was only a diversionary tactic of the robbers who robbed the bank," said Senior Supt. Wenphrygod Gaoiran, QCPD director.

Supt. Franklin Mateo Mabasang, chief of the QCPD Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit, said two armed men, who fled toward an eastbound road, entered the supermarket and, pointing their guns at the guard, grabbed the bag containing P800,000 in cash as it was being loaded into an armored van in front of the establishment at around 9:10 a.m.

Mabasang said the money was the store's earnings for the past three days. At least 12 officers on duty at the time when the armed duo struck were held hostage by the robbers, who escaped in a waiting vehicle driven by their companion.

All armed

The witnesses said the 15 robbers were all armed with handguns except for one who had an M16 assault rifle." Mabasang told the lawmen.

As the armed men were fleeing, Baterna allegedly tried to grab one of the robbers but he was shot in the chest.

Moments later, the robbers boarded their motorcycles and fled toward the direction of Marikina City.

Nearby three hours later, from near, armed with armed office forced into the Union Bank branch on Cubero Building E.de 6.94 Timog Avenue.

The robbers, who grabbed from three vehicles, pointed their guns at the cashier, customer's customers and two guards of an armored van parked in front of the bank.

The attackers, dressed in camouflage uniforms and police uniforms, barricaded cops and bystanders, ordered some 20 people inside the bank to lie face down at gunpoint. Soldiers said the robbers took a cell phone and removed antenna from the dashboard of the latter, the bank's collection from several Banger Mobile customers in Quezon City.

Residents and passersby who saw the incident said 12 other armed men remained outside the bank. "It was who was holding a long firearm were stood in the middle of the street and directed the flow of vehicles," said Moises Andaya, a resident at a nearby mall.

Rolando Ravena, the bank security chief, said the robbers fired at the tires and gas tank of their armored van at its driver, Antonio Talaroc, tried to smash the vehicle into one of the armed men's vehicles.

Getaway

Before boarding their getaway vehicles, the robbers also fired at the bank's glass panels and other nearby established stores.

Edwin Bendaño, Union Bank customer who was arrested, escaped their clothes that the bank would resume normal operations despite the incident, adding that they would review their safety measures.

MMDA needs traffic aides, engineers

By DJ Yap

IF YOU DON'T SEE TRAFFIC enforcers on the streets or other areas you usual to, it's because there are fewer of them these days.

According to the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, it is making the services of some 1,700 traffic enforcers who have opted for early retirement.

But the agency assured the public that it is trying to make up for the manpower shortage through the strategic deployment of traffic enforcers.

"For instance, if there used to be four men at an intersection, we will now deploy two," MMDA General Manager Robert Nazareno said. He added that the agency has 1,320 enforcers on duty.

The officers and 760 traffic enforcers have left the agency in the past two months after the latter among hundreds of MMDA personnel who applied for early retirement as part of the government's drive for employee-reduced forces.

According to Nazareno, the MMDA is now processing hundreds of applications for the vacancies. "Right now we have about 300 who passed our qualifications," he said. Applicants should have two years of college education and a height of at least 5'4" for women and 5'6" for men.

The traffic enforcer positions were among the 6,000 vacancies announced by the MMDA late last year, including those for operators of heavy equipment, mechanics, welders, drivers, parkmen and engineers. Graduates of architecture/engineering or technical-vocational courses are also needed.

The prospective new hires are required to undergo training (piloted by the MMDA program, including its ambitious "Metro Groups" beautification project), among others.

3 PAF men give Makati bad case of jitters

By DJ Yap

THREE AIR FORCE MEN carrying high-powered firearms in front of a bank in Makati City Tuesday drew the suspicion of police who promptly arrested and detained the trio.

The men, one of them a staff sergeant, were flagged down at midnight Tuesday after their superiors in the Philippine Air Force reached for them.

But no apologies were forthcoming from Makati police chief Supt. Gilbert Cruz, who said the soldiers had it coming.

"They aren't coming. They did not coordinate with us in the first place," Cruz said.

"We don't need a report of the Nov. 29 incident," the official said, referring to the brief takeover of the Peninsula Manila hotel by a group of junior officers led by a former colonel, Antonio Trillanes, now a senator.

Cruz said the sight of gun-toting soldiers in public triggered unpleasant memories of previous military excursions in the city — the site of the failed Oakwood mutiny of 2003 and the more recent Peninsula siege.

"We weren't going to take any chances," Cruz told the heirarchy. "The thought that this could be another demobilization attempt did cross my mind."

The police identified the men as S/Sgt. Jonathan de Guzman, 45, and Airmen 1st and class Giovanni Magat, 27, and Rodel Dimayuga, 24.

Wearing civilian clothes, the three were caught at 3:30 p.m. Monday by a mobile patrol unit in front of the United Overseas Filipinos Bank at the corner of Don Chino Roces Avenue and Ayala Avenue, a report by PNP Nodrigo Ignio said.

The men were aboard a Mitsubishi Lancer with plate number XGS 814 and were reportedly carrying an M16 rifle, an M79 rocket launcher, and a .45 caliber pistol, Ignio said.

The Air Force men, who told the police they were just on an errand to have a cabinet fixed, could not produce identification cards and proof they were authorized to carry weapons, Cruz said.

The three were detained at the Makati Central Police Headquarters until 12:20 a.m. Tuesday before the Air Force finally confirmed their identities and designations, the police said.

DID YOU KNOW

ON FEB. 3, 1983, the Spanish king established a scholarship to write Jose Lanta. The murder was given P1,000 to finance his art studies in Rome on the condition that he should make his travels for the Ayuntamiento of Manila for many year of his studies. GMA Kanlaon, Inquirer Research

Tighter watch on liquor sale to QC minors

By Jeannette I. Andrade

QUEZON CITY NOW HAS A task force to strictly enforce the liquor ban among minors.

Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. has tapped Liquor Licensing and Regulatory Board Chair Alfonso Gokiangkee to head the task force created to monitor the compliance of restaurants, bars and other night spots with a city ordinance prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages and other intoxicating drinks to minors.

The task force is also mandated to review the license to operate of any business establishment found violating the ordinance.

Under City Ordinance 85, series of 1996, persons below 21 years old are prohibited from buying or drinking beer and other intoxicating drinks in restaurants, bars, resorts, pavilions and other similar places in Quezon City where the drinks are served or sold.

Violators face a fine of not more than P500 or imprisonment of not more than six months or both.

Pasig says yes to gambling

By Kristine L. Alave

GAMBLING AND GAMING ESTABLISHMENTS will be allowed to operate in Pasig City after the City Council passed an ordinance legalizing and regulating their existence.

Ordinance No. 27, authored by Councilor Ronaldo Lipana, is aimed at regulating the establishment and operation of gambling and betting activities in the City.

The local law covers various licensed gaming centers, poker, card games, casinos, bingo, basic, off-track betting, jai alai houses and other similar activities that were approved by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor).

According to the City Council, the ordinance aims "to prevent the proliferation" of gambling dens that operate without securing them. It assigns a similar process in getting licenses.

Ordinance 27 is the first law of its kind in Pasig City before it was enacted in December local officials said there was no specific law governing gambling and betting centers in the city, which made it easy for businessmen to set up gambling and gaming shops.

Under the law, gambling and betting centers would not be allowed to get permits from City Hall, particularly the mayor's office. They also need to process accreditation from Pagcor.

The ordinance also prohibits the setting up of similar establishment within a 200 m radius from the nearest entrance or exit of a church, hospital, government building and educational institutions.

Owners of gaming, gambling, and betting centers should not admit minors or those below 18 years of age in their establishments, unless accompanied by an adult.

If the manager or owner doubts a customer's age, he should ask for the customer's identification card, the ordinance said.

Violators will face confiscation of their equipment and the associations of their permits and will be fined up to P5,000, with a maximum jail term of one year.

METROBRIEFS

Woman shot, robbed

A WOMAN is now in critical condition after being attacked by four motorcycle-riding robbers in Pasay City early this afternoon.

Tawee Tuyo Marieler Fabros, the wife's chief's police, identified the victim as Ruth Rolando Dino, 42, a businesswoman and resident of Antonio Street in Barrio City. The incident happened after the suffering at around P200,000 in cash from the Metrobank branch on Macapagal Ave. in Barrio Gil Puyat district at 2:50 p.m. yesterday. "It looks like the robbers followed her," Fabros said in a phone interview. Cases investigator P03 Marionette Agustin Jose translated the incident report as the case of Gen Gil Puyat district P.S. But Ruth Dino lived

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Guevo

Tens of thousands flee Chad as rebels vow fresh offensive

NDJAMENA—TENS OF thousands of civilians fled the Chadian capital on Monday, as rebels threatened a fresh offensive to oust President Idriss Deby after two days of heavy fighting saw them pull out of the city.

In New York, the UN security council unanimously agreed a condemning statement condemning the rebel attacks and urging member states to extend support to the government.

The government said its forces had pushed the rebels from N'djamena, but rebel leaders insisted they had made a strategic withdrawal.

Deby's leaders blessed the capital's streets and buildings were pockmarked with bullet holes after a weekend of heavy fighting. Most shops remained closed and in the wealthier districts houses had been devastated by looters.

Colonel Mahamat Ali Abdallah, commanding government forces, told AFP the rebels had been "completely routed.... Time is going to show that they have been defeated."

But a military source later spoke of a rebel column, comprising around 50 pickup trucks, positioned at a southern entrance to the city.

Government forces had used tanks and helicopter gunships on Sunday to repel rebel fighters after they surrounded the presidential palace where Deby was holed up.

Rebel spokesperson Abderaman Koulamallah, contacted Monday by satellite telephone, said the insurgents—the most serious that Deby has faced since coming power in 1990—were far from over.

"We have pulled out of the city and we are waiting for the civilian population to be evacuated," Koulamallah said. "We expect to leave the city, but we certainly will go back on the offensive," he said. AFP

PEOPLE carry their belongings on their heads across a bridge into Cameroon to flee fighting. AFP/EPA

Octagenarian named new Mormon leader

MORMON

SALT LAKE CITY—Thomas Monson, a longtime senior leader of the Mormon church, was officially named its 16th president on Monday at the age of 80, assuming the reins of one of the world's fastest-growing and most influential religions.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as the church is officially known, has a global membership of 13 million, over half of whom reside outside the United States, in country of origin.

Monson takes over from Gordon Hinckley, who passed away on Jan. 27 at the age of 97 after leading the church since 1995.

Monson had been Hinckley's second-in-command.

During his almost 13-year tenure, Hinckley supervised goals for building new temples and launched a strategy to reach out to an American public largely ignorant about the religion.

Monson said he would continue on the path of his predecessor.

"We will continue the commitment of those who have gone before us in teaching the gospel and promoting conversion with people throughout the world," Monson said. Reuters

ELECTRICAL nerves damaged by heavy snowfall are seen in Chenzhou in China's Hunan province on Tuesday.

Millions without power in China

KAILI, CHINA—THANH MINH pilots an oxcart, trying to return to normal in rural China. Such sidelines are likely to spoil the biggest holiday of the year without power, heat and water in what for some is the coldest winter in a century.

The freezing weather in the east set to last through New Year's break, which begins on Wednesday, and offers the only chance for poor migrant workers to visit loved ones, has killed scores of people and left millions stranded.

While cities have had their powers and water cut off for over a week and so far 11 electrocutions have been killed trying to reconnect lines or break ice running pipes and cables.

Kaili, with a population of half a million in the subtropical southern province of Guizhou, was cut off for several days by thick ice and fog.

On the road from the provincial capital Guiyang, many areas are still covered in thick ice with pine trees bitting or broken under the weight. Local television has shown downed power lines and towers.

Rail and other major country capitals are receiving electricity, but cuts are still common in China's villages in the countryside remain without power and there could be many days if not weeks before it is restored. Reuters

Kenya gov't, opposition start negotiations to end conflict

NAIROBI—KENYA'S GOVERNMENT and opposition began talks Tuesday to end political violence that has killed at least 300 people and brought one of Africa's brightest economies to its knees.

Under the mediation of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the two sides agreed on Monday on immediate steps to help the hundreds of thousands displaced by the violence and said they would move next week on the political impasse.

"On Thursday[,] we begin our work on the political issues, the crisis arising out of the December 2007 elections," Annan said after talks with President Mwai Kibaki's disputed reelection on Dec. 27. Opposition leader Raila Odinga says he stole the vote, Internationl observers said the count was so chaotic it was impossible to tell who won.

What started as an electoral dispute has unveiled decades-old divisions between tribal groups over land, wealth and power, dating from British colonial rule and ruled by British politicians during 44 years of independence.

About 300,000 people have been displaced over the past month as rival communities fought in towns and villages around the country and government-backed militia were accused of executing opposition supporters.

Annan, flying west gas and fire assault.

In Washington, White House national security adviser Stephen Hadley said on Monday resolving the standoff in Kenya had a "long way to go" but negotiations between the government and opposition appear to be real.

US diplomatic efforts were also to send a clear message to Kibaki and Odinga to stop violence which from dispute is doing to Kenya and to agree to stabilize the situation, said Hadley. Reuters

Two million protest against Colombian rebels

BOGOTA—ABOUT THREE TWO million Colombians—the majority of worldwide Monday against the Farc Marxist rebels, according to official figures, demanding the freeing of hostages and an end to decades of violence.

Shouting rebel slurs saying "We down Farc" and "Be more kidnapping," demonstrators brought normal business in Colombia to a virtual standstill as they flooded the streets of 30 main cities and 125 capitals around the world.

Horrific stories of the brutalities of the hostages rotting in the jungle ...and I want all the citizens of the world to realize that the Farc is not Colombia," one demonstrator, Marian Rosas, said in Bogota.

They were the largest rallies ever organized against the Farc—designated Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc), coming a day after the armed group pledged to release three former lawmakers held hostage for seven years in the jungle.

The Colombian government has sought to link the demonstrations to its own tough policies on the Farc and in recent days made repeated appeals for a ceasefire public television.

"Today the citizens have more faith in the state, they have more faith in the army," conservative President Alvaro Uribe declared on private television Sunday.

The protestations has used television coverage over the past week to try and mobilize the crowds with images of hostages behind bound wire to their chests.

Bogota's Mayor Samuel Moreno said that more than 1.5 million people converged on Bolivar square in the heart of the city and hundreds in other parts, citing police figures. AFP

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- Solid, precision-grade construction
- Ultra-long 10 month battery life
- Compact size
- Double "Metal-to-metal Contact free" design
- Chic and stylish design
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- Unique auto-start/halt function
- Unique anti-backlash design

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- Chinese Drums and Cymbals Exhibition
- Chinese Choir
- Wushu Exhibition
- Chinese Calligraphy

SM SUPERMALLS

50

CHINESE NEW YEAR EVENTS

Mandarin Dragon Parade

Catch the performance of the 228-foot long dragon symbolizing progress and prosperity.

Feb 3 - Megamall

Dragon, Lion & Martial Arts Exhibition

Experience the mixed delight of this Chinese cultural extravaganza.

Feb 3 - Megamall
Feb 9 - Manila

The Dance of the Great Lions

Enjoy a traditional Chinese dance that represents the descent of good luck.

Feb 7 - All SM Supermalls

Chinese Drums Exhibition

Feel the beat as drummers perform choreographed movements on traditional Chinese drums.

Feb 2 - North Edsa

Chinese Drums and Cymbals Exhibition

Experience the exciting rhythm of this percussion performance.

Feb 1 - Bicutan
Feb 2 - Southmall
Feb 3 - Manila, Muntinlupa
Feb 7 - Sucat
Feb 8 - Taytay
Feb 9 - North Edsa, Fairview, Valenzuela, Megamall

Chinese Choir

Listen to the soothing melodies sung by a Chinese choir.

Feb 1 - Southmall
Feb 3 - Manila, San Lazaro
Feb 4 - Muntinlupa
Feb 5 - Sucat
Feb 7 - Sta. Mesa, Bicutan
Feb 8 - North Edsa, Fairview, Valenzuela, Megamall, Pasig

Chinese Ensemble

Take a musical journey with performances of traditional Chinese music.

Feb 5 - Sta. Mesa
Feb 6 - Manila
Feb 7 - North Edsa, Fairview, Valenzuela, Megamall
Feb 9 - Pasig

Wushu Exhibition

Watch masters ease off their skills in this full-contact sport derived from traditional Chinese martial arts.

Feb 2 - Megamall
Feb 4 - Bicutan
Feb 5 - Muntinlupa
Feb 6 - North Edsa, Fairview, Valenzuela, Taytay, Southmall, Sucat
Feb 7 - Manila
Feb 9 - Sta. Mesa

Tai Chi Exhibition

Catch a glimpse of Tai Chi masters demonstrate this self-martial art form.

Feb 2 - San Lazaro

Feng Shui Consultations

Get expert advice on how to achieve harmony in your environment.

Feb 1 - Megamall
Feb 6 - Sta. Mesa
Feb 7 - Sta. Mesa, San Lazaro, Manila, Southmall, Bicutan, Sucat, Muntinlupa
Feb 8 - Pasig

Chinese Calligraphy

Learn the intricacies of this ancient art.

Feb 6 - Sta. Mesa
Feb 7 - Sta. Mesa, Manila, San Lazaro, Southmall, Bicutan, Sucat, Muntinlupa
Feb 8 - Megamall

Chinese Face Painting

Bring the lion to a vibrant, artful paint right and symbols of good luck.

Feb 3 - Manila

Baby Lion Dance

Watch this traditional Chinese dance where little performers mimic lion movements.

Feb 9 - Taytay

Chinese Mimes

Enjoy the performance of artists as they interpret Chinese history stories through body movements.

Feb 1 - Megamall
Feb 3, 6 & 7 - Manila
Feb 9 - San Lazaro

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Donaire, Molina year's top athletes

MOLINA

DONAIRE

Pacquiao, So, Miñoza major awardees, too

By Rodrigo S. Austria

ALMOST ANONYMOUSLY, Nonito Donaire Jr. jabbed away at the myth of invincibility that cloaked Vic Darchinyan. And then with one solid punch, he broke into local boxing's stream of consciousness.

In a country whose population willfully gathers at the feet of the iconic Manny Pacquiao, Donaire's resurrection triumph in Carmichael virtually sealed his triumph as the year's best athlete.

But from the stuck of a disastrous Philippine performance in the Southeast Asian Games, a long-haired swimmer rose, fishing gold after gold from the pool to ensure that on the night Che-cantik-lo hitter his sporting heroes, Donaire would not go solo.

Donaire and swimmer Miguel Molina were unanimously selected as co-winners of the Athlete of Year award handed out yearly by Philippine Sportswriters Association, the country's foremost media organization.

Donaire, 25, captured the IBF flyweight crown by ending Vic Darchinyan's unbeaten run via a knockout triumph in August last year.

The 23-year-old Molina, on the other hand, embraced the country's full-front grace in the biennial regional meet by collecting four swimming gold medals and bagging the Best Male Athlete award of the event.

The list of candidates left at the order of the two made like a prestigious who's who list: Pacquiao, golfer Frankie Miñoza, pool idol Jeanette Alcoseo and young Grandmaster Paulen Ico.

"It was a hard decision considering that all the candidates were deserving," said PSA president Atilano Lardizabal after the balloting. In the end, it all boiled down between Donaire and Miguel Molina, whose daring exploits came at the unexpected time."

The two will be honored in the San Miguel Corporation-PSA Annual Awards Night on February 16 at the IM Hall of Asia.

Pacquiao, Miñoza, Alcoseo and Ico however, are included among the honorees to be feted with major awards by the media group composed of sportswriters from the country's national broadsheets and tabloids.

The awards night, sponsored by Shakey's, the Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., Asiavi, and Rasmandon Trophies and Sculptures (www.rasmandonawards.com), will be broadcast over DZSR Sports Radio 918 and can be followed in real time at www.pba.ph by clicking the sportsradio icon.

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Nokia-RP youth five toughens up in PBL as guest squad

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL LEAGUE (PBL) has opened its doors to the national senior men allowing the Nokia-Philippine youth team to play as a guest squad in the league's next conference.

"We're just finishing the details [of the youth team's participation]," said league commissioner Chino Trinidad.

"They're welcome to show their skills in the PBL. It has always been a part of the PBL program [to help RP teams]."

The Flatbow-RP men's team that captured the gold medal in the 2007 Southeast Asian Games also included a PBL guest stint in its training.

National youth coach Franz Pumaren said his cagers, 10 players will toughen up playing rules five to 10 years their senior.

"We're joining to gain experience and to jell as a team," said Pumaren. "We want to know what we need to develop, our weaknesses, and who can really help us in future competitions."

The Nokia-RP youth team will plunge into its first international competition in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association youth conferences in Kuala Lumpur on May 1, followed by the Asian Youth Championship in Tehran in September.

Aside from their PBL exposure, the high school cagers will also train in the renowned Joe Abunassar basketball camps in the United States next month.

The squad is bannered by Ateneo standouts LAAP juniors champ De La Salle Zobel, Ateneo's Frank Golla, University of the Philippines' Mark Lopez and Joseph Marcos, Xavier's Gabriel Sanad and Saint Stephen's Hoodie Cullen.

Those from Ateneo de Davao University, Holy Cross of Davao College, Mapua Institute of Technology, University of Santo Tomas, University of the East, Far Eastern University, San Sebastian College-Recoletos, Lyceum of the Philippines University, Arellano University, Adamson University, National University, Jose Rizal University, Philippine Christian University, Emilio Aguinaldo College, Manuel L. Quezon University, Colegio de San Juan de Letran, Centro Escolar University, Philippine Women's University, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Technological University of the Philippines, Philippine Merchant Marine School, Philippine Normal University, Philippine School of Business Administration, Manila Central University, Our Lady of Fatima University, Trinity University of Asia, Asia Pacific College, Systems Technology Institute, Mapua Institute of Technology, Colegio de Muntinlupa, Lyceum of Subic Bay, Lyceum of Batangas, Lyceum of Cabuyao, Lyceum of Aparri, Lyceum of Tuguegarao, Lyceum of Baguio, Lyceum of Northern Luzon, Lyceum of Clark Field, Lyceum of Pampanga, Lyceum of Cavite, Lyceum of Laguna, Lyceum of Rizal, Lyceum of Batangas, Lyceum of Quezon, Lyceum of Bicol, Lyceum of Iloilo, Lyceum of Bacolod, Lyceum of Cebu, Lyceum of Mindanao, Lyceum of Davao, Lyceum of Cagayan de Oro, Lyceum of Zamboanga, Lyceum of Iligan, Lyceum of Tacloban, Lyceum of Ormoc, Lyceum of Dumaguete, Lyceum of Bohol, Lyceum of Surigao, Lyceum of Butuan, Lyceum of Koronadal, Lyceum of General Santos, Lyceum of Tagum, Lyceum of Digos, Lyceum of Kidapawan, Lyceum of Cotabato, Lyceum of Marawi, Lyceum of Jolo, Lyceum of Basilan, Lyceum of Zamboanga del Norte, Lyceum of Zamboanga del Sur, Lyceum of Zamboanga Sibugay, Lyceum of Misamis Oriental, Lyceum of Misamis Occidental, Lyceum of Lanao del Norte, Lyceum of Lanao del Sur, Lyceum of Maguindanao, Lyceum of Sultan Kudarat, Lyceum of Sarangani, Lyceum of South Cotabato, Lyceum of North Cotabato, Lyceum of Davao Oriental, Lyceum of Davao del Norte, Lyceum of Davao del Sur, Lyceum of Davao Occidental

DAVIS CUP

RP, Japan squads all set for tie

By Mac Anthony Reyes

TENSION IS THICKENING AT THE REAL MEMORIAL TENNIS Courts, and it's totally not unexpected.

Both Cup hosts Philippines and Japan have been taking Cup training up at the unlighted tennis court Sunday so they get ready for their all-important Asia Oceania tie starting Friday.

The winners of the one-nation Asia-Oceania World Group play-off for the next season on the hitting grass court.

"They don't practice together but they alternate on the courts," said chief organizer Randy Miranda. Philippine Davis Team Administrator also predicted for his co-development. "If we practice [for] a day, the Japanese also practice [for] a day."

Filipino Americans Cecil Mamiit and Eric Taino will again spearhead the Cabuenas Lhuillier-RP Davis Cup team with Patrick Adoc Twins and Johnny Arcilla rounding out the squad.

"They (Japanese) are formidable, but then are a tough team at the same time," said the 31-year-old Mamiit. "If we can get our people involved during the matches and get the environment we had in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games, then it could be great."

Though already in tip-top shape, the back-to-back SEA Games singles gold medalist Mamiit continues to sharpen his ground strokes, according to Villanueva.

Pantilio say Mamiit and the rest of the team will get their hands full against the tough Japanese.

The Japanese, who arrived on Sunday, have nominated veterans Takao Suzuki, 31, and 132-year-old Satoshi Iwabuchi as their singles players, also on the team is 23-year-old Go Soeda, ranked No. 232 in the world, and 19-year-old Yuichi Sugita.

The deciding of ties will be held at 6 a.m. tomorrow at the Century Park Hotel.

Hostilities begin at 10 a.m. Friday, after the opening ceremonies where singer Heidi Lunel will sing the national anthem.

Sports patron from Pasay Lhuillier is skipper of the team in the three-day event which is supported by Head, Prince, Israel, Pilatus and Cabuenas Lhuillier.

Japan, which holds a 10-9 edge over the RP squad in past Davis Cup matchups, is keen on beating the Filipinos especially after getting relegated to Group 2 following a loss to Kyrgyzstan last year.

Going into Friday's opening singles, the Philippines has some eight straight ties and needs two more wins to keep intact the World Group for the first time since 1991.

Ring Magazine hypes up Pacman-Marquez clash

JUST HOW BIG IS THE MANNY PACQUIAO-Juan Manuel Marquez rematch from March 15?

It's big enough to land on the cover of the February issue of The Ring Magazine, the bible of boxing. The issue will be on sale on Feb. 26.

As it appears on the Ring Magazine website, the cover photo shows the previous rivalry facing each other with Pacquiao pictured on the right.

In a research dubbed "Unfinished Business," the 34 year-old Marquez will make his World Boxing Council super featherweight crown against Pacquiao, 29, on March 15 at the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

The bloody Pacquiao-Marquez trilogy threw their first round knockdowns in their first three bouts in 2004 to forge a controversial draw with the Filipino superstar.

Ring's current issue also carries interviews of Pacquiao-Marquez II, written by Don Stewart.

Pacquiao is also on the cover of Ring's 2008 Boxing Almanac & Book of Facts with Floyd Mayweather Jr., Oscar dela Hoya and three other big stars. Ben Lozada

Southern Ladies tees off today; Shin top pick

THE 40TH SOUTHERN LADIES golf tournament gets under way today with the foreign bidders led by defending champion Crystal Thumber and the members of the national team expected to fight it out for top honors at the Bacolod Golf and Country Club in Bistin, Marvin, Negros Occidental.

Already the winner of the last two editions of the annual tournament, Thumber will be hard-pressed to annex a third championship title as many talents out to foil her bid.

Children Ibada Jesuits is Shin's toughest challenger in the Ateneo tournament following the 30 Japanese's back-to-back victories in major local events.

The event also features SEA Games silver medalist Anja Tanjutco, who calls the course home.

The players are expected to take advantage of the lack of winds that time of the year at the par-70, 5,171-yard layout.

Pro boxer dies after Leyte fight

By Sabrel L. Lagumbay, Correspondent

ALEX AKOY OF TOLOSA "WARRIOR" Sabucl Stable died on Villaba, Leyte, about an hour after losing to a 10-round fight against Israel Tadena of Elizabeth Boxing Gym Monday night.

Games and Amusements Board (GAB) Cebu chief Celso Miranda, who supervised the bout, said the fight was competitive throughout, although he noticed no unusual lack of stamina in Akoy's punches.

Tadena beat Akoy, nicknamed "Leyte Bombers" via scores of 97-93, 98-93 and 97-93.

Akoy reportedly died just after midnight early Tuesday.

According to Miranda, Akoy was granted 47 seconds rehydrated point on knee after the fight, and was immediately brought to the nearby Villaba District Hospital—where he subsequently expired—for examination with Physio.

Akoy's manager Ben "Mikee" Jakad said the district hospital lacked the facilities to resuscitate Akoy. Doctors ordered the latter to another hospital in Palompon where they brought him.

Jakad has suggested that an autopsy be made on his fighter.

In April last year, former World Boxing Council youth flyweight titlist Angelito "Lito" Tamayo Jr. died of brain bleeding after losing to former world champion Chatchai Sasakul in Thailand.

Makati 8-cock s'finals begin

THE SEMIFINAL ROUND OF THE MAKATI International 8-Cock Super Derby gets going at 2 p.m. today at the Makati Coliseum Fighting Arena.

Guaranteed prize have grown to P3 million due to additions of more entries, according to [illegible]. Andy Jakad and [illegible] of PCI Sports and Entertainment Corp.

Bird sportsman Claudio Hao's Super Clyde and EC, title champion in Sweden's 2006 World Slasher Cup, clutched its winning run to 8-0 and led the entries with 24 tokens.

[illegible] Ryan Bong Aurea, Ramon Sun, Tony Lim Atilio, Rico Abad, Aurea Sun, Jay Garcia, Alexis Fabian, Jose Lacson and Jacinto Ang.

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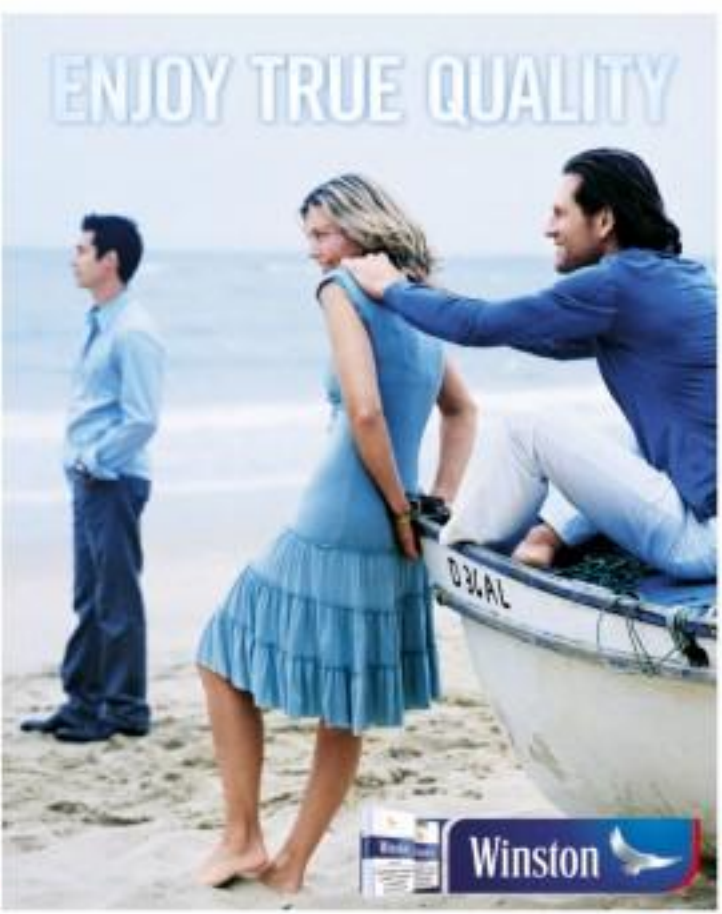

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SPORTS

Hot Jazz torch Hornets

Rockets fan road streak, cage Timberwolves

UTAH—THE RED-HOT UTAH JAZZ CRUISED TO THEIR NINTH CONSECUTIVE win on Monday, topping the New Orleans Hornets, 103-88, in a battle of Western Conference division leaders.

Deron Williams had 28 points and 11 assists for the Northwest Division-leading Jazz, who won for the 23rd time in 29 home games.

Williams made 11 of 12 shots for the game, hitting three of the Jazz's team-record 14 three-pointers.

"We played extremely well," Hornets coach Byron Scott told reporters. "We just didn't do so very good job of guarding him. He was in his comfort zone."

Carlos Boozer added 19 points and 17 rebounds and Kyle Korver connected on six three-pointers to score 20 points for the Jazz, who won their 11th consecutive home game.

"When they shoot the ball like that it's going to be hard to beat them, but I didn't think we gave them much of a resistance either," Scott said.

The loss was the third in a row for the Hornets, who dropped onto a tie with the Dallas Mavericks for the Southwest Division crown.

Jannero Pargo led New Orleans to 26 points, Hornets standout Chris Paul was held to six points and six assists.

"I think they did a good job of closing out the lane. Usually get to the lead line pretty easy, score it there," Paul said of his opponents. "We just couldn't get into a rhythm, and they got us out of what we like to do."

In Minneapolis, Tony Mallard scored 26 points when the Houston Rockets won their eighth consecutive road game, beating the Minnesota Timberwolves, 92-88.

Yao Ming added 16 points, Al Jefferson had 30 points and 16 rebounds for Minnesota.

In Orlando, Florida, Josh Howard scored 28 points and the Dallas Mavericks overcame Hedo Turkoglu's triple-double to hold off the Orlando Magic, 107-98.

In Miami, Chris Bosh scored 24 points, Andrea Bargnani added 22 and Toronto delivered more indignity to Miami's season of epic struggle by thrashing the Heat, Stoudemire's Heat, 134-82.

In Atlanta, Josh Smith had 19 points, nine assists and nine blocks to lead the Hawks to a 96-81 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers after trailing by 29 down in the first quarter.

In New York, Corey Maggette scored 19 points in his return to the lineup and the LA Clippers snapped a nine-game road losing streak via a 103-94 triumph over the Knicks.

In Phoenix, Leandro Barbosa scored 31 points and Raja Bell added 24, including a season-high seven three-pointers, to help the Suns win easily over the Charlotte Bobcats, 119-104.

In Seattle, Joe Smith scored 22 points in his first game back after missing three with an injury and the Chicago Bulls defeated the Supersonics, 118-108.

In Portland, Oregon, Allen Iverson's 14-foot buzzer-beating jump shot with less than a second left in overtime gave Denver a 105-103 victory over Portland.

Reuters, AP

NEW Orleans Hornets guard Jannero Pargo (left) reads Utah Jazz guard Deron Williams to the floor on his way to the hoop.

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Els hopes to bounce back after loss

SOUTH SIDE—HOPE ELS SAYS HE'S agonizing loss to Tiger Woods in Dubai on Sunday is history and he is fully focused on striking his name on the inaugural Indian Masters trophy this week.

The world No. 4 started the final day of the Dubai Desert Classic four shots behind Woods but his approach to the green on the 18th went in the water and it cost him the tournament. He eventually finished third.

Despite the disappointment Els, who has made it his season's goal to win majors and deny the gap on Woods, said he took positives out of the experience—his first round of the year.

"It was obviously a pretty disappointing way to end the tournament on Sunday. It's always tough to take, but I have to look at the week as a whole and try to draw some positives from that one," he said on his website.

"I felt like I was swinging the club well and, considering it was my first tournament in six weeks, I was pretty sharp and competitive out there.

"In the end, like I said, it just came down to a couple of mistakes. Obviously I have to eliminate those from my game, but other than that everything is okay."

The 38-year-old fourth-ranked is among the most widely-traveled golfers on the circuit, regularly globe-trotting to events in Asia, and he headlines the $2.5-million Indian Masters at Delhi Golf Club this week.

It is the first event in the European Tour has visited India and Els said he was keen to help set the event.

AFP

ELS

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US forges Fed Cup duel vs Russia

MARKLEDICAD

SAN DIEGO—LINDSAY DAVENPORT AND Ashley Harkleroad won their singles on the United States to beat Germany, 4-1, in their Fed Cup quarterfinals on Monday.

Both wrinkled out all play on Sunday with the score 1-1, and Davenport quickly put the American ahead on Monday by defeating Julia Goerges, 6-1, 6-2, in 40 minutes, then Fed Cup first-timer Harkleroad secured victory by closing Sabine Lisicki, 6-4, 7-5, rallying from 4-1 down in the second set.

Davenport and Harkleroad completed the tie by winning the doubles, 6-2, 6-0, over Sania Lisa Gronefeld and Frayen Mitsch.

The US will visit defending champion Russia in April for their third semifinal against each other in four years.

"I'm fresh of Russia," US captain Zina Garrison said. "Obviously, we know we're going into it. It's going to be tough. Lindsay's already given me the go-ahead to call those Williams sisters and beyond.

"I'm going to go for both of them. We need the strongest team possible out there. If I get one and Lindsay, that's good, but if you can get both of them, that's an extra bonus."

AFP

After triumph, Manning eyes title sequel

MOMENT: Jason Jones of New York Giants receiver David Tyree (left) manages to make this crucial catch against the tough defense of New England Patriots safety Rodney Harrison that set up the Giants' comebacking behind win. But everybody agrees the catch was incredible.

PHOENIX—JUST HOURS AFTER winning the Super Bowl and being named its MVP, New York Giants quarterback Eli Manning said he was ready for a repeat performance.

"I'm happy today. I'm fired up," Manning told reporters on Monday. "I'm going to enjoy this moment. But you still want to have this feeling again.

"I will still have the same commitment to football (next season)."

Manning, 27, completed 19 of 34 passes for 255 yards while leading the New York defense workshop Giants (14-4) to a 17-14 win over the New England Patriots on Sunday.

The self-spoken Manning guided the Giants to two clutch fourth-quarter touchdown drives to stun the Patriots' 18-game winning streak.

Manning's 13-yard TD strike to Plaxico Burress with 39 seconds left gave the Giants their first title since 1990 and ended the debate over whether the 2007 Pro Bowl over the NFL host team ever.

The play that will be remembered in the Giants' final drive when Manning emerged from the grasp of two Patriots linemen and scored a 32-yard touchdown to David Tyree.

With 1:15 left and the Giants trailing 14-10, Tyree caught the Patriots' Rodney Harrison and hit the ground as the New England 24 with the ball pressed against his helmet.

Four plays later, Manning found Burress for the game winner.

Manning did not realize how spectacular Tyree's catch was until he saw the replays on television.

"Last night when I got home, I watched it over 4-5 times," he said.

"I saw a little bit of it on the field but didn't get to appreciate what a great catch it was.

"We have to hold on to that ball, hold it against his helmet. And I just pulled back. And guys swinging at the ball. It was just a great individual effort."

Manning's effort on that play was just as crucial.

"People were asking me how I got out of that jam. I was like, I really don't know. They were pulled me down," I felt them holding me but I never felt anybody pull me to the ground.

"I stayed alive. I saw David in the middle of the field. I gave him a shot to make a catch. An unbelievable one by."

Reuters

IN THIS ISSUE

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- **NFA to issue P8B** worth of bonds /B5

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Maronilla • Assistant Editor Edna Cuevas S. Nuñez

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ASIANA AIR

Higher food prices push up inflation in Jan.

Rate of increase in consumer prices hits 4.9%

By Michelle V. Remo

RATE OF INCREASE IN CONSUMER prices reached 4.9 percent in January from a year ago—its fastest pace since November 2006—pushed by the accelerated rise in costs of all commodity groups.

The latest year-on-year inflation figure was a full percentage point higher than the 3.9 percent recorded in December 2007.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile prices of selected food and energy items, reached 3.4 percent in January, inching up from the 2.6 percent recorded the previous month.

According to the National Statistics Office, inflation in areas outside Metro Manila was faster at 5.1 percent—an acceleration from the 4.2 percent of the previous month. In the metropolis, inflation reached 3.9 percent—also faster than the previous month's rate of 3.5 percent.

Socorro Bautista Jr., governor of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, said the four upticks in price hikes in January resulted in limited supply of some food items.

Also, the increase in the costs of electricity and water contributed to the faster increase in consumer prices, Tetangco added.

"Monetary authorities will continue to assess latest price developments and pitch policy to corresponding inflation outlook and balance of risks," the BSP chief assured the public.

Victor Abola, economist from the University of Asia and the Pacific, said supply of some food items were hampered by the seasonal rains in January. He added, however, that this factor inflation in January was not likely to be sustained in the coming months.

"We had plenty of rains that is quite unusual," Abola said. "But it is a conjecture that

Shares close 1.2% lower

Old ideas given new push at energy summit

By Dixie L. Lacsi

"WE WANT TO MAKE SURE that this summit is not just talk. We will not just walk the talk, but we will also walk the walk."

Thus said Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes at the end of the 2008 Energy Summit, vowing to ensure that the resolutions and recommendations arrived at after almost a week of consultations would not go to waste.

Before handing the recommendations—all three big binders' worth—over to President Macapagal-Arroyo, however, the energy chief gave the assembled stakeholders a glimpse into their contents.

The summit's recommendations confirmed earlier views that bulk of the answer would be a commitment among various sectors of the energy industry to do things better rather than to do things in a new way.

In his speech, Reyes said that one big priority of the energy summit was to lower power costs in the country, which continues to suffer from the highest electricity rates in Asia, excluding Japan, in over years after the passage of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001—the very law that was supposed to cure this situation.

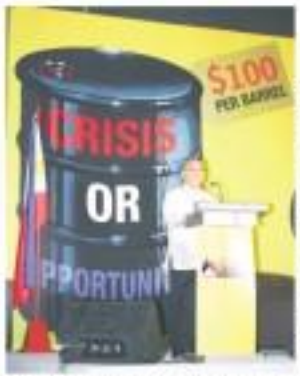
"We need the full implementation of 'open access' and we need to accelerate the implementation of 'time-of-use' rates," he said.

Open access transmission service refers to the scheme that would allow consumers to choose from which power producers to buy them electricity, in the hope of having producers to compete in terms of price.

Time-of-use, on the other hand, refers to the scheme where producers will be charged different power rates depending on what time they consume electricity. While both are nothing new, these ideas have been floundering due to the seeming lack of urgency to implement them.

Reyes said the recommendations also included a push for the Renewable Energy Bill which, he said, sets an idea that has been languishing for the last two decades—again, not a new idea but, instead, an old one that just needs to be implemented—as still as the establishment of a "one-stop shop" to facilitate sustainable energy projects.

The energy summit also recommended the acceleration of the implementation of the year-old Biofuels law as well as the greater use of compressed natural gas for the public transport sector, Reyes said.



ENERGY Secretary Angelo Reyes delivers his opening remarks during the 2008 Philippine Energy Summit held at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City. The government hopes to follow through with the resolutions and recommendations arrived at the end of the summit.

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Globe eyes local borrowing for capex

By Riza T. Olchondra

GLOBE TELECOM Inc. intends to borrow ₱500 million from the domestic market to finance its capital expenditure for 2008 as it fights to keep its share in a recovering market.

"We are looking at it (domestic borrowing)," Globe CFO Delfin Gonzalez told reporters in a briefing Tuesday afternoon.

He said there are no definite timelines and arrangements with local banks since yet.

The country's second largest telco is prepared to spend up to $450 million in capital expenditures this year compared to 2007's capex of $360 million, about $158 million

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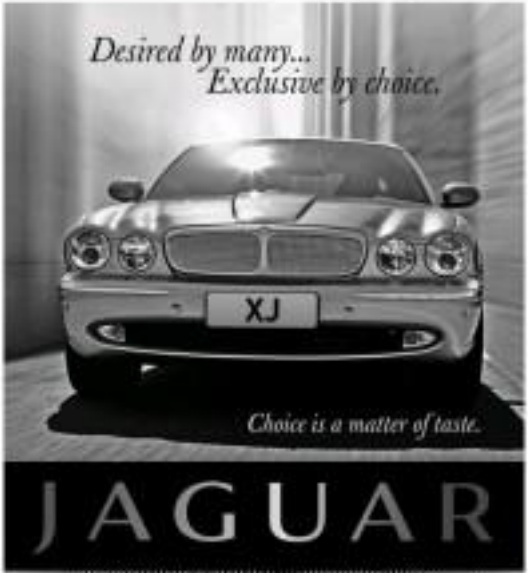

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Prototype B1

gal of Westlink Global Equities. "But the element of uncertainty is there and is making investors a bit more cautious."

Philex securities are keeping a wary eye on Wall Street amid fears of a US recession, Macapagal said domestic political developments also need to be closely monitored.

Early Tuesday the House of Representatives voted to oust Speaker Jose de Venecia in a move orchestrated by President Macapagal-Arroyo's two sons who sit in Congress.

"The market is becoming sensitive again to political noise. In previous years, we have seen the market cushion political noises to some markets on the region because of political uncertainty," said Jose Mateo of AB Capital Securities.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. shed P10 or P3,000, marking the downturn in its shares in Depository Receipts overnight.

Globe Telecom Inc. fell P40 or P1,600, after it's five-day rally ahead of the release of its 2007 results.

Conglomerate Ayala Corp. was down P12.50 or P460, following several gains. AFP

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Capital investments up 9.3% in '07

Indication of renewed investor confidence in economy

By Michelle V. Rafael

CAPITAL INVESTMENTS IN... listed into the economy last year by 9.3 percent, the highest rate of increase in six years.

Government economic managers said this could be another sign of the substantial improvement in the country's macroeconomic climate.

They said the 9.3 percent growth in capital investments last year could help the economy weather the ill-effects of the anticipated recession in the United States.

In 2006, capital investments rose by 2.7 percent, a... measured from an 8.6 percent decline posted in 2005.

Measured in constant 1985 prices, the base year used by the government in measuring real economic growth, capital investments reached P239.67 billion last year from P219.29 billion in 2006.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said the ability of the domestic economy to sustain the growth in investments was an indication that the Philippines was gradually regaining investor confidence.

Beltran said the drop in investments in 2005 was due to the perceived instability of the government to push its fiscal reform measures.

This negative perception stemmed from the delay in the implementation of the 'value added tax Reform Law, considered the consequence of the agenda to reduce the government's budget deficit, due to a temporary restraining order by the Supreme Court.

The drop in investments in 2005 was the second biggest decline following that in 1998 when the height of the Asian financial crisis, capital investments in the country plummeted by 18.3 percent.

"Ideally, the growth in investments should have been higher than 9.3 percent. But the sustained growth means that investors were searching a lot more for the economy," Beltran told reporters.

Investments growth last year was partly credited for the 7.3 percent gross domestic product growth last year, the strongest in 31 years.

Economic managers said the robust economic growth was anchored on the improved fiscal condition of the government, which attributed to revenue and expenditure measures to speed more on infrastructure and social services.

Public grade school woes

EDUCATION SECRETARY JESLI LAPUS bemoans the terrible state of our public grade schools. In short, the teachers are not trending, and the pupils are not learning.

I may have stumbled into the root of the problem.

Whenever I am in Naga City, my hometown, I pay a visit to Camarines, one of the small outlying towns. Camarines is old, dating back to the late 1500s. It is where my maternal roots are.

Last Christmas, I made a round of visits to my relatives in Camarines. My fiancé, Juliets, whom I had not seen in ages, joined me. She, after 29 years in the service, she retired as a ninth-grade teacher in the Camarines Elementary School at the end of the 2006-2007 term, along with four contemporaries.

When the 2007 term opened, the five retirees had not been replaced. Ten people who should have been handled by the replacements were spread out to the remaining classes. As a result, the active teachers are overloaded with classes of as many as 70 pupils per class, cramped to overcrowded limits.

Under such terrible conditions, the quality of grade school education in Camarines has inevitably plummeted.

Because of the teacher shortage, there are four empty classrooms in Camarines, and 10,000 nationwide.

The short-term solution to the problem is to hire retirees like Juliets on a contractual basis. Juliets can continue to receive her GSIS pension as she did. She does not prevent a retiree from going back to work with the government.

On the long term, Depld should take steps to improve the resident's lot.

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Horacio C. Guiterrez

Salaries should be raised. For Juliets, who from just one blush from the Camarines Elementary School, her salary was more than ample for her needs. But a teacher living in Laguna and assigned in Makati spends too much for commuting. A room in Makati is an option but the rent would take a big chunk from his salary.

I do not know what the enrollment in teachers' colleges nowadays is. I suspect most of our high school graduates go into nursing. There should be a result proposal to raise enrollment levels in the normal schools.

Above all, Depld should embark on a crash program to allow the teacher to regain his long-lost professional pride.

A long time ago, the public school teacher—or maestra—was a highly respected member of the community. When I was growing up in Naga City before World War II, there were two names in our neighborhood whom everybody held in the highest esteem. They were public school teachers—or maestras.

Today the only government facility in a city flying banner is a public grade school. The teacher is the only government employee in the area.

Teaching is not a job. It is more than a profession. It is a vocation. For the teacher, money is not the only thing that counts.

PAL earmarks P3.5B for wide-body fleet renovation

By Rita T. Olchondra

PHILIPPINE AIRLINES WILL BE SPENDING $73.5 billion to renovate its long-range, wide-body fleet.

The major modification is the reconfiguration of the wide-body aircraft layout from the current six-class to in-class: Mabuhay (business) Class and Fiesta (economy) Class.

The move is intended to address the growing popularity of business class services, apart from competitive pressures to upgrade the service, PAL said.

The flag carrier said in a statement on Tuesday that five Boeing T47-400 and four AirFoil 340-300 aircraft will be refurbished by phases.

The first of the aircraft will be sporting new interiors by June this year and the entire program is due to be completed by the last quarter of 2009.

The refurbishment involves the installation of in-seat personal cabin interiors and state-of-the-art Audio/Video On Demand (AVOD) technology—a fully digital inflight entertainment system that enables both Mabuhay and Fiesta Class passengers to choose from a full library of video and audio content.

Also, new German-made flatbed seats will be installed, each seat to be outfitted with personal television consoles with touch-screen controls on passenger control units.

The new cabins will have a generous seat pitch of 86 inches in Mabuhay Class and 32-to-34 inches in Fiesta Class.

The refurbishment and advanced technology will be complemented by a new inflight meal service method in Mabuhay (business) Class, dubbed "One by One," where the service is designed to fit each passenger's individual needs.

BoC to raise capital to P15B

By Doris C. Dumlao

MUSEUM-SIZED BANK OF Commerce plans to push up its capital to P15.3 billion this year from the 9.3 billion following the entry of San Miguel Corp.'s investment fund and property units into the bank.

The amounts will be raised through the sale of P2 billion in new common shares to a new group of investors by end-March and the offering of P6 billion in subordinated or tier 2 (capital) notes and hybrid notes, BoC president Raul de Mesa said in a press briefing on Tuesday.

De Mesa said the aggressive capital-raising would fund strategic expansion and the possible acquisition of another bank should a good opportunity arise. He added that the bank's board recently approved a plan to seek from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas a license for expanded commercial banking.

"By the end of the year we'll exceed P10 billion and this will fund our requirements for (the) (automated teller machines), investment in technology, branch expansion and to grow in assets," De Mesa said.

For this year, the bank plans to focus its new lending business by P6 billion from about P30 billion in 2007, focusing on two specific niche markets—the so-called "prepaid-to-postpaid" group and the traditional family-owned enterprising people.

Currencies

February 5, 2008		Bank Buying Rate	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	1.0000	1.0000	40.3400
Japan	Yen	0.0091	0.0092	0.3682
United Kingdom	Pound	1.9945	1.9945	80.4698
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.1284	0.1284	5.1807
Switzerland	Franc	0.8778	0.8778	35.4168
Canada	Dollar	0.9944	0.9944	40.1268
Singapore	Dollar	0.6948	0.6948	28.0347
Australia	Dollar	0.8783	0.8783	35.4370
Taiwan	Dollar	0.0307	0.0307	1.2383
Korea	Won	0.0011	0.0011	0.0436
South Africa	Rand	0.1398	0.1398	5.6410
France	Euro	1.4713	1.4713	59.3617
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.0001	0.0001	0.0041
Thailand	Baht	0.0298	0.0298	1.2024
UAE	Dirham	0.2723	0.2723	10.9870
KSA	Riyal	0.2666	0.2666	10.7574
Kuwait	Dinar	3.5000	3.5000	141.1900
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.2746	0.2746	11.0787
Brunei	Dollar	0.6948	0.6948	28.0347
China	Yuan	0.1284	0.1284	5.1807
Denmark	Krone	0.2641	0.2641	10.6565
India	Rupee	0.0251	0.0251	1.0124
Norway	Krone	0.1788	0.1788	7.2145
New Zealand	Dollar	0.7419	0.7419	29.9346
Sweden	Krona	0.1545	0.1545	6.2326
Lebanon	90.5000	0.0552	0.0552	2.2265

Source: Bankers Trust Company (Philippines) Inc. (Feb. 5, 2008)
* Central Bank of the Republic of Belarus (Belarusian Ruble) ** Central Bank of Iceland (Icelandic Krona) *** Central Bank of Iceland (Icelandic Krona)

Ortigas eyes P12-B residential project in QC

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

ORTIGAS & CO. LTD. PARTNERSHIP, one of the country's biggest land developers, is embarking on a P12-billion residential community project on its newly acquired 12.5- hectare property in Quezon City.

Ortigas & Co. chief operating officer Rico Quiazon said the residential project, which is being conceptualized as an "oasis in the city" that will consist of residential condominium units and townhouses, would start in July.

The company has tapped global architectural and planning firm RTKL to prepare the concept and design of the project.

With price tags ranging from P2.5 million to P3 million per unit, the residential project caters the middle income market. It will make available 3,000 units in both low and high-rise buildings.

The "mini-community" will rise on Doña Hemady Street, Sapphireland in Quezon City, near Libis where the old warehouses of an Ortigas and Co. subsidiary are located.

The 12.47-hectare property was purchased by Ortigas & Co. from its listed firm Asian Concrete Aggregate Corp. (ACE), for P1.324 billion.

Ortigas investment corporate secretary Michael Alunde B. said in a disclosure Monday that ORC and Ortigas & Co. executed last Feb. 1, a deed of sale for the property.

Ortigas & Co. initially paid P150 million from the proceeds with the balance to be paid in 40 equal quarterly installments at 6 percent interest on the principal.

ORC is 72.6 percent owned by Ortigas & Co. It owns real estate assets and a quarry operations.

GMA orders implementation of open access

By Abigail L. Ho

RESPONDING TO THE CLAMOR FROM industries for globally competitive power rates, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered the immediate implementation of open access, even on a partial and limited basis.

In a speech during the culmination of the Energy Summit yesterday, she said the Department of Energy together with power companies from telecom stakeholder groups, should come up with a way to implement open access, even while awaiting the fulfillment of the preconditions prescribed by the law.

She instructed former Energy Secretary and now Mandl. Pacheco chief Vincent Perez to work with Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes to come up with a mechanism to implement open access at the soonest possible time.

In an interview with reporters, Perez said he was willing to take on this new challenge.

"Recognizing the importance of this matter in sustaining the economic growth of this country, I will immediately coordinate with Secretary Reyes to convene a meeting among the private generation companies, distribution utilities and other stakeholders to head the call of President Arroyo. We hope to enhance all means to design a program that will implement early open access and give our consumers the power of choice in the near future," he added.

Under the open access regime, large power users will be able to choose their own power suppliers, unlike under the current system where they are limited to the supplier that has jurisdiction over their respective areas.

Before open access can be implemented, RA 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, mandates that five requirements be met, including the establishment and commercial operation of the wholesale electricity spot market, the approval of unbundled transmission and distribution wheeling charges, the implementation of the open subsidy removal scheme, the privatization of 70 percent of National Power Corp.'s Luzon and Visayas operations, and the transfer of 70 percent of National Transmission Corp. to the private sector.

Power producer contracts to IPP administration (Napocor).

Only the first three requirements have been met so far.

Higher food prices push up inflation in Jan.

From page B1

oil prices started to move below $99 a barrel in February, said an inflation could be on the upward trend."

Abola added that oil inventory in the United States, one of the biggest consumers of oil, has increased. This would put downward pressure on oil prices, he added.

In January, Abola noted, oil prices were still way above $90 a barrel.

The National Statistics Office reported the rise in inflation for the January 2008 consumer price index (CPI) was primarily caused by food, beverage and tobacco (from 4.6 percent to December to 5.9 percent in January); clothing (from 5.6 to 2.3 percent); housing and repairs (from 3.1 percent to 2.3 percent); fuel, light and water (5.3 to 5.5 percent); services (4.9 to 5.4 percent); and miscellaneous items (from 1.3 to 1.6 percent).

For food alone, inflation accelerated from 5.1 to 6.2 percent.

The BSP has set a goal of limiting inflation at 3 to 5 percent this year. Despite the accelerated rise in inflation in January, monetary authorities and private sector analysts still believe that inflation will settle within the official target this year.

Old ideas given new push at energy summit

From page B1

Just about the most radical idea presented to the President yesterday was a proposal to abolish the tax that is levied on working citizens, and instead replace it with a so-called "carbon tax" whose value would depend on the amount of carbon dioxide each citizen releases into the environment.

The proposal was met with amused astonishment by the audience at the SMX Convention Center in Bay City yesterday.

Another radical idea which was unveiled by President Arroyo—even though she could not remember its name during her speech—was the seven-thermal energy conversion (OTEC) concept proposed by Dr. Daniel McManaman Jr., which would convert heat stored in the ocean into electrical power.

Yesterday the President moved more to search funding for the project as proposed by the Japan scientist.

Other proposals put forth by Reyes included the banning of the dumping down an Ilocos (roadway) by abusive traffic enforcers and a renewed drive against emission public utility vehicles, both of which are meant to satisfy the clamor of the transport sector.

"There are over 300 initiatives so far followed in the report. Our net effort at the level of consensus," he remarked, explaining that consensus points were labeled "green initiatives" while points where stakeholders disagreed were labeled "yellow" and "red," depending on the degree of disagreement.

Finally, Reyes vowed to implement a "three-tiered" monitoring system that will encourage energy industry stakeholders to watch the progress of other sectors, creating "peer pressure effect" meant to ensure everybody's compliance with the agreed points.

Globe eyes local borrowing ...

From page B1

will be taken from internally generated funds.

Out of the total capex for the year, $110 million will be for sports (or broadband GSM and wireless), $130 million for 3G cellular services, $40 million in IT and other requirements, and $100 million in nonrecurring capex, including investments in its international carrier project.

Investments in 3G services totaling $130 million are mentioned across those areas.

Much of the capex for 2008 will be spent on broadband and cellular services in a market that is expected to be characterized by increased penetration, a strong pose that weakens the value of overseas workers' income, and the effects of economic turmoil in the United States.

"According to analysts' studies, the (cellar) market could grow by eight to ten percent, and we (Globe) want to take advantage of that opportunity of that," Globe president and CEO Gerardo C. Ablaza Jr. said, declining to be more specific on revenue and subscriber growth prospects.

"I am more watchful on how the peso will perform. While it seems not in the horizon for us, because our topline pay back while our dollar-linked costs become easier to bear, the real effect is in the spending power of the mass market."

Globe's assessment is that, overall, the industry will continue to grow but the pace will depend on developments in broadband and the economy as a whole.

NFA to issue ₱8B worth of bonds

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY WILL sell P8 billion worth of 10-year bonds today. proceeds of which will be used to fund its operating expenses this year.

The bonds will be sold to an auction today to be held at the Bureau of the Treasury. In a memorandum to dealers of government securities, the BTr said the NFA could increase its bond offer by P2 billion, if demand is high.

Specifically, proceeds of the bond issue will be used by the NFA to buy rice and corn, fund its capital expenditure requirements and pay maturing debts.

The bonds will be guaranteed by the national government.

The bonds will also have a call option feature on 2013, meaning the NFA may buy back the bonds in 2013.

SB Capital and Investment Corp., Deutsche Bank, Multinational Investment Bancorporation, Philippine Commercial Capital Inc., SB Capital Investment Corp. and the Unicapital Securities Bonds have been appointed joint issue managers, BTr said in a statement.

Tapping the capital market for its financing needs came amid encouragement by the Department of Finance for state-owned firms to rely less on subsidies and loans from the government and instead improve and rely on their own revenue-generating capabilities.

The proceeds of the bond flow will help plug NFA's budget deficit this year, which is expected to come below last year's P4.5 billion.

The NFA is infamous for posting the biggest loss among government corporations.

It receives a subsidy of P900 million a year from the national government's annual budget.

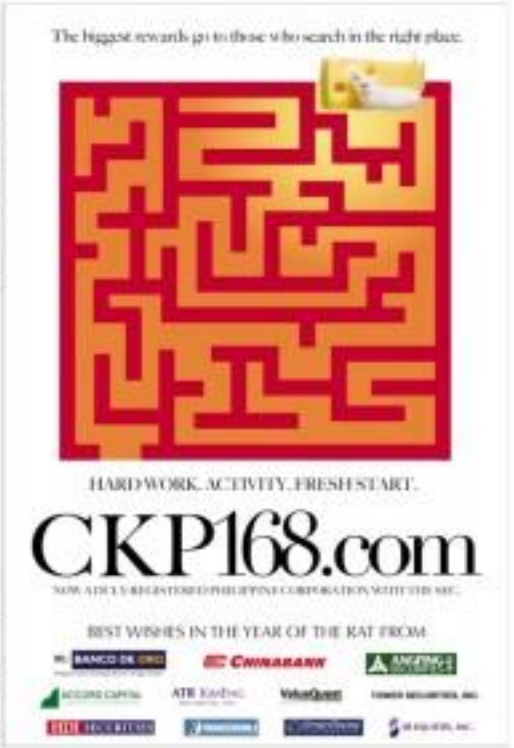
But NFA said posting a loss was inevitable due to its mandate to ensure the steadily supply and low prices of rice.

"This means that there are times when it has to import rice at a high price then sell it to the local market at lower prices just to keep selling prices low.

The NFA thus is pushing for the separation of its regulatory and commercial functions to help stop its financial bleeding.

A bill separating the NFA's regulatory and commercial functions is pending at the House of Representatives, but has not been certified as urgent.

The NFA is one of the biggest rice importers in Asia and is considered a drag on government finances.



Asia shares down on US, bank worries; bonds up

SINGAPORE—ASIAN SHARE MARkets fell yesterday with financials such as Japan's MUFG among the weaker performers after US credit card firms and banks were downgraded, sending fears there would be could spread to the global economy.

The dollar held steady against the euro at 1.4611, while the Australian dollar was supported by a hike in interest rates to an 11-year high.

Share markets in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Sydney fell between 0.9-1.3 percent. MSCI's measure of Asian stocks excluding Japan was down 0.7 percent by early yesterday afternoon.

Major indexes suffered on Monday, hassled by merger and acquisition woes, when Shanghai's composite scored its biggest daily fall since June 2005 after regulators approved two new stock funds.

Japan's Nikkei index closed down 0.8 percent, with Hondo Motor Co. Ltd. under pressure after downgrades of US credit card firms hurled recession fears.

"Ordinary investors and voters all the image that if the US economy down, Japanese exporters will be hit," said Paul Janke, a senior managing director at Challenger Asset Management.

Downgrades to financial institutions such as American Express, combined with a report showing slowest-than-expected US factory orders, hurt other economically sensitive sectors such as home builders and retailers on Wall Street on Monday.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 1.3 percent, while Singapore's Straits Times slid 1.8 percent. But South's KOSPI index rose 0.4 percent, with investors picking up some beaten down stocks after the index plunged 14.4 percent in January, the worst monthly performance since October 2000.

Activity in Asia has been subdued so far this week, partly due to Lunar New Year holidays across much of the region later in the week.

In stock markets across Asia hassled bank gains from Monday's rally. Japanese government bonds held firm, although shedding some of their earlier gains.

Kobe slipped on Monday after Mitsubishi Corp.'s $417 billion bid for Yahoo and China's purchase of a stake in takeover target Rio Tinto boosted investor optimism over share valuations.

The Australian dollar traded at $0.9071 against the dollar, hovering near three-month highs, after the Reserve Bank of Australia lifted cost by a quarter point to 7 percent and said a "significant" slowing of growth was needed to keep inflation contained, which makes traders as a signal that more rate rises could be imminent.

The $500 move, which had been reported by market watchers, was in sharp contrast with other major central banks that are raising rates.

The Australian dollar was steady at 1.06.45 yen, holding off a three-year low of 104.95 yen struck in January. Reuters

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

NOTICE TO THE DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED COOPERATIVE RURAL BANK OF AKLAN (CRBA)

1. Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 155 dated January 30, 2008 ordering the closure of the Cooperative Rural Bank of Aklan, the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) will start its operations for the processing of claims for insured deposits in the closed bank on **Thursday, February 7, 2008**.
2. Depositors are requested to proceed directly to the premises of their respective branches where they can file their claims with the PDIC representatives during office hours (8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.), Monday to Friday, except holidays, as set:

Banking Unit	Office Address	Payout Period
Head Office	Tabing Ilog St., Kalibo, Aklan	Feb. 7 to 20, 2008
Nabas Branch	Nabas, Aklan	Feb. 7 to 21, 2008
Batan Branch	Batan, Aklan	Feb. 7 to 28, 2008
Ibajay Branch	Ibajay, Aklan	Feb. 7 to 21, 2008
Pandan Branch	Pandan, Antique	Feb. 7 to 21, 2008

After the cash date, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC Claims Counter, 6th Floor, SSS Bldg., Ayala Avenue corner V.A. Rufino St., Makati City from Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. or by mail to:

The Assistant Vice President
Claims Processing Department
Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
2330 Chino Roces Avenue
1231 Makati City

3. Depositors are advised to present the following requirements to the PDIC representatives when filing their claims:
   a. Original evidence of deposit such as Savings Passbook, Certificate of Time Deposit, or Bank Statement including Unused Checks.
   b. Two (2) valid identification cards/documents (IDs) with depositor's signature.

Other documents may be required by the PDIC representatives in the course of their claims filed.

4. Pursuant to the provisions of R.A. 3591, as amended by R.A. 9302, the last day for filing claims for insured deposits in the closed Cooperative Rural Bank of Aklan is on **February 1, 2018**. After February 1, 2018, PDIC, as trustee, shall no longer accept any claim for insured deposits maintained by the said closed bank.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

(Pub. February 6, 13 & 20, 2008)

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES
PANGASINAN LENDING CENTER
Mother Ignacia Avenue, Quezon City, Pangasinan
Tel. No. (075) 546-7366; 546-0176 Telefax No. (075) 546-7366

INVITATION TO BID

Sealed proposals together with 10% bid bond for the purchase on CASH BASIS of the Bank properties listed below will be received at the **LBP-Pangasinan Lending Center, Urdaneta City, Pangasinan** not later than **March 05, 2008 at 2:00 pm** or which place, time, and date, each proposals will be opened in the presence of attending bidders.

	Property Description / Location	Minimum Bid
1	**TCT No. T-72817** – Unregistered agricultural land containing an area of 6,109 sq.m., more or less, with improvements consisting of: Fish pond with area of 200 sq.m. and solar dryer with area of 150 sq.m., situated in Brgy. La Paz, Urdaneta, Pangasinan	₱81,000.00
2	**TCT No. T-72358** – Unregistered containing an area of 3,163 sq.m., more or less, situated in Brgy. Casibo, Urdaneta, Pangasinan	₱31,000.00
3	**TCT No. 220580 & TD No. 43** – two (2) contiguous parcels of fishpond with an area of 8,228 sq.m. & 17,918 sq.m., respectively, situated in Bo. Dulig, Labrador, Pangasinan	₱ 600,000.00
4	TCT No. 309732 – agricultural land with an area of 9,000 sq.m., more or less, situated in Bo. Dorongan-Calomboyan, Mangaldan, Pangasinan	₱ 90,000.00
5	**TCT No. 309733** – agricultural land with an area of 9,491 sq.m., more or less, situated in Bo. Dorongan-Lomboanggan, Mangaldan, Pangasinan	₱95,000.00
6	**TCT No. N-309529** – residential land with an area of 360 sq.m., more or less, located on Yellow Peeling St., Sarrosa Gardens (Novaliches Subd. Phase III), Brgy. Payong Pulo, Quezon City	₱ 900,000.00

If for any reason the above mentioned date is declared a non-working holiday, then the public bidding shall be held on the next day at the same time and place aforementioned.

Bidding forms may be obtained from the Office of the Head, Pangasinan Lending Center, Urdaneta City, Pangasinan. Prospective bidders are enjoined to inspect the above listed properties before entering their bids. The sale of the properties shall be "AS-IS, WHERE-IS." The winning bidder(s) shall take possession of the awarded properties without seeking assistance from the Bank.

The Bank reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality therein or accept the bid proposals, which in its judgement is most advantageous to the Bank. The Bank's decision on the matter shall be final and binding.

(Sgd.) **AVP FRANCISCO A. PASADO**
CBC — Region 1 & Western GAR
Chairman
Regional Committee on Bids and
Awards and Disposal of Bank Properties

CLOWNS offer a new way greeting during a promotional campaign for US fast-food giant McDonald's Beijing, at the opening of a 24-hour branch. China's emerging economy, with a population of 1.3 billion people and a developing middle class that is projected by 2020 to be larger than the total US population, set populations to exceed of 1 billion people in more than 50 cities, is an attractive market for foreign business ventures. AP

Toyota Q3 net up 7.5 %

TOKYO—TOYOTA MOTOR CORP POST ed 7.5-percent rise in quarterly profit on Tuesday as superb growth in China, Russia and other emerging markets made up for a slowdown in the United States, and it kept its annual forecast unchanged.

Quarter December ten profit at Toyota, the world's most profitable automaker, was 484.6 billion yen ($4.13 billion).

For the full year ending on March 31, Toyota left its forecast unchanged for a net profit of 1.7 trillion yen and operating profit of 2.3 trillion yen...record sales for the seventh straight year.

Toyota, valued at $199. bil lion—about 12 times the market capitalization of General Motors Corp.—has seen its momentum slow in the key US market, but has been making up for that with rapid expansion in developing markets such as China, Russia and the Middle East.

That has helped Toyota shield itself against a downturn in the United States...the source of much of their profits—which has been dogged by falling housing prices, a slowing economy and credit woes. Reuters

Oil prices fall below $90

SINGAPORE—OIL PRICES SHrunked Tuesday, weighed down by persistent concerns about the flagging US economy and tight market liquidity.

"The market is in an extreme mentality as worries about the economy in the US continues to weigh—it's unclear how deep the recession will be, if there is a recession," said Phillip Olsen, a currency trader with Prudent & Co.Ltd in Singapore.

"Meanwhile, the market wants to move in tandem with global equities markets."

The front month contract for March delivery lost 26 cents to $89.78 a barrel in Asian electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange by midday in Singapore.

The contract rose $1.06 to settle at $90.04 a barrel on Monday after the US government signalled strong data on factory orders, easing hope that the world's largest economy will dodge a recession that would curtail demand for energy.

A temporary closure of the Houston Shipping Channel and a ship channel near Port Arthur, Texas, both key waterways used to transport crude oil to Texas refineries, also pushed prices higher Monday.

Oil prices should drop further in the coming weeks as demand diminishes with the end of the Northern Hemisphere's winter, one analyst said.

"We're entering the shoulder season between the Northern Hemisphere winter, which is ending, and before the US summer driving season ... pricing should soften," he said. AP

FROM DEFECTOR TO ECONOMIST

Taiwan's Lin Yifu gets top WB job

BEIJING—JUSTIN LIN YIFU'S ROAD to one of the most prestigious posts in international economics has been a winding one—that of senior economist at the World Bank—began incomplete early on a May night in 1970.

Lin, then a 26-year-old computer commander in the Taiwan military, clambered on Hainan island onto the Chinese mainland, hurled two hand-held grenades under his nose and swam the 2,000 meters (2,200 yards) to the mainland with ease.

"He had been preparing for a long time, booking across the Taiwan Straits towards the city of Xiamen on the other side and he decided to jump into the black sea," China's state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Lin had been a star student at home, attending the prestigious National Taiwan University and National Chengchi University and was considered one of the bright young academic hopes of his generation.

His rise following his defection to China was predictably fast, achieving a master's in economics from Beijing's prestigious Peking University in 1982.

In 1986, he earned a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, for decades the spiritual centre of free-market ideology, led by liberal thinkers such as Milton Friedman.

It the Chicago school of economics was not exactly orthodoxy yet in China in the 1980s, it did not seem to make a clear on Lin's influence after he returned home.

"He's a tireless worker and he's got fantastic connections," Lu Ping, a long-time colleague, told AFP. "He took up politics (by School Prize for Economics, I think it will have something to do with that."

Lin, 55, is a professor and the founding director of the China Centre for Economic Research (CCER) at Peking University as well as a professor of economics at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

He is the first Chinese to hold the World Bank post, has written extensively on China's economic reform and opening up to the outside world, and has earned acclaim as a top think tank.

He is also unlike his right hooks, including "China Miracle: Development Strategy and Economic Reform," which has been published in seven languages. AFP

Baguio not keen on crematoriums

By Nesario Cabanza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—Residents here are having a tough time introducing crematoriums to the community, as most would prefer to see burying as the only way to remember the dead.

This after the city council failed to approve a resolution last year that would have authorized the construction of a memorial park operator to build a crematorium here.

Citing the results of a December 2007 public hearing held before the measure was shelved, Councilor Jose Molintas, vice president of Alpa-Pedi Inc., which runs the Pinewood Memorial Park here, said residents there are still reluctant to have their dead cremated.

The memorial park here is operating on a 5-hectare memorial path," he said

People, Events & Products

Editor Arlen Rapicora

MFMCP donates to Give A Life Foundation

THE MUTUAL FUND MANAGEMENT Company of the Philippines Inc (MFMCP), a member of The ATR Kim Eng Group, has donated, on behalf of its fund investors, P50 for every P1 million worth of domestic mutual fund assets to Give A Life Charity Foundation. The proceeds were used to purchase doses of chemotherapy drugs Doxorubin and Cytarabine for the benefit of brave Filipino children battling leukemia. The donation was handed by MFMCP's management personnel, and did not impact in any way the financial condition or daily NAVPU per share of its mutual funds.

MFMCP president and CEO Philip Fil Hagedorn said, "This being the season to share our blessings with others, we felt it appropriate to step beyond merely contributing to our customers' and the economy's well-being. As believers in long-term investing, we in MFMCP are acutely aware that development in the two areas is central to issues of dollars and cents, and not enough to the conservation and restoration of that far more vital ingredient: human capital. For this time of year is also the season of children, of affirming life, and of reminding ourselves why we are all here."

SUZUKI AWARDS OUTSTANDING FRANCHISEES

Leading independent car firm Suzuki Philippines Inc honored its top regional franchisees for 2007 during the first Suzuki Dealer Congress held recently at the Legazpi Palace Suites. Ten franchisees of the Yen-sensitive auto cluster based on sales volume, historical trends record, good housekeeping, technical service and integrity. Shown from left, front row: Andrei Flores Fernandez of Luzon; Serafina Cua from Davao; and Florida Jakosalem from Mindanao. Second left, back row, Jim Cua, Suzuki marketing director; Francis Yu, Suzuki chair; Elmer Ang, awardee for Outstanding Station for Customer Service Audit; Michael Lucas Gonzalez from north Luzon; Ronald Espinosa from Metro Manila; and Mark Yu, Suzuki board member and officer. Other special awards given to non-attending Suzuki dealers were Most Number of Vehicles Most Number of Units Sold Acquired in 2007, Highest Sales Growth, and Loyalty Award.

HIRC, UNIVERSAL MOTORS LUCKY DRAW WINNER

Ang Pag-Ibig sa Kotse sales winner on a Hyundai Matrix Petrol Super Value from HIRC's "Feelin' Fantasy" campaign conducted from June 1 to Sept. 30, 2007. Barcelona, volunteer P2.5 million, source examines Tina at an awarding ceremony held at the Universal Motors showroom in Makati Avida Tower featuring the award-worthy passenger unit and financial services that were with a Peso eVantage account, public banks to HIRC's "Feelin' eVantage" campaign were instantly rewarded with gift certificates from various exhibitions. Also, prize were entitled to another to Barbosky done. To know more about PesoeVantage or to open account, call 891-800 or log on to www.hirc.com.ph. Shown are, from left, Alfonso Uy, Universal Motors GVP for marketing/Elizabeth Lim; Ang Pag-Ibig, HIRC SVP for marketing Chris Penarlo; and HIRC personal banking head Joyce Hsu.

CISCO, GLOBE REV UP FOR CISCO EXPRESS NOW

Networking leader Cisco joins forces with Globe to welcome the Cisco Express Network on Wheels (NoW), a mobile showcase of Cisco technologies and solutions housed in a 40-foot container. Globe is a full-service telecommunications provider of fixed and wireless solutions. It is working closely with Cisco in developing converged and IP-convergence solutions for large corporate customers and SMEs. Above are (from left) Jessie C. Romero, Globe enterprise business group head; Gil B. Bonto, Globe business head; Lucio Bolido, Cisco country manager and Marie Guggenheim Gann, Cisco channels and marketing head, at the recent signing of a memorandum of agreement between the companies. The Cisco Express NoW arrived in the Philippines on Jan. 21 and made key stops in Baguio (Jan. 25 and 26), Makati (Jan. 24 to 28), Bohol (Jan. 29 and 30), Subic (Feb. 1 to 4), Camp Aguinaldo (Feb. 5) and makes its next stop in Laguna (Feb. 7 and 8).

JAC Prince launch at Hot Air Balloon Fiesta 2008

THE BIGGEST MEET COLORFUL AVIation sport event in the country today, the 12th Philippine International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta (Pibaloon) 2008 will run Feb. 7 to 10 at the Clark Freeport Zone. 25 balloons from 14 countries all over the world will be delighting everyone with such exciting events as hot air balloon flights, paragliding, skydiving and choreographed balloon-ballet performances with special nite-flying, nobody denies, search and rescue demos and many others that will truly delight the senses.

The 12th Pibaloon also the venue for the formal launch of JAC Prince, the high quality, low-priced light truck from JAC China's top commercial vehicle maker whose market now includes Europe, Russia, Latin America, South America, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. JAC Prince is targeted at Filipino entrepreneurs who want value for their money. According to Noel Sarmiento, general manager of JAC Automotive Industries Corp. Philippines Inc (JAC-Asia), JAC Prince is Euro 2 Emission Standard compliant, and can be customized for any business logistics requirements.

Exceeding target by 15%

JAC-Asia VP Angie Tanseco, meanwhile, disclosed she talked about how to JAM sales exceeded target by at least 15 percent. "This is mainly due to the fact that entrepreneurs are now more practical, preferring the brand new yet low-priced light trucks to surplus trucks. With our wide variety of products that get the vehicle that they need and the quality they want at a much lower cost, the company hopes to help them add to their capital," she added.

The good news is that the company is making JAC Prince even more affordable with its special 20-percent down payment promo during the Pibaloon launch, where the complete lineup of JAC-Asia products (JAC Princes, JAC Quons, JAC Eing, Forklifts and Mini Coach Buses) will also be showcased. A may different show and a great truck deal-less great reasons that make your Pampanga trip all worth it.

SECURITY BANK BAGS GOLD QUILL PLUM

Leading universal bank Security Bank Corp was recognized with an Award of Merit in the annually conducted Philippine Quill Awards for Business Reporting (PQUAB) in the category, the 2006 Annual Report (Adaptability Excellence). The Annual Report provides in-depth review of the bank's accomplishments and financial performance for 2006. The bank was awarded rates as the best of the company's stellar field of another impressive financial performance, topping over its peers in the industry with a 25-percent share in total loans. The design of the publication was inspired by the success of the bank, shaped through more than five decades of excellent banking services to its clients. The Philippine Quill Awards is an annual recognition given by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) to the best communication programs and tools. Security Bank bagged its corporate communication Nicole Rapadas and communications officer Ron Bautista. Above (2nd and 3rd) Leonardo Cruz receives the award from IABC director Uli Jerusalem and Ms. Jerusalem and Ms. Cruz in Sea Ski of Manila Bulletin Company executive Ms. Cruz is a 2004 Honoree of the Inc magazine angel entrepreneur and is on the Board of Directors of Makati City.

Annual sales rally kicks off 2008 Isuzu activities

ISUZU PHILIPPINES CORP (IPC) kicks off its string of marketing activities with the sales rally, the annual wake-up call for the frontliners, which was held at the Development Academy of the Philippines (Tagaytay) and Canyon Woods Residential Resort in Lemery, Batangas Jan. 18 to 19.

The 2008 sales rally zeroed in on brand-as-ever better appreciation of Isuzu's product line-up as well as salesmanship values, all combined in a "Hyzuzu" concept that reinforced the call to awaken the sales sales executives in them, and to better gear Isuzu's sales force for the challenges of 2008.

IPC president Koji Takeda, in his sales report to the 280-strong dealer-sales force delegation at the start of the 3-day event, expressed confidence in achieving the retail sales target pegged for 2008, citing Isuzu's sales force as "the better unit of the same form, "the best sales force in the world".

Acclaimed consultant, features facilitator for strategic marketing and planning Ricardo de Vera banged on appropriate salesmanship values needed by the sales force to face their challenges and counter challenges ahead.

Key IPC activities focused on better appreciation of Isuzu's product line-up, particularly the power of the 4JJ1 engine found in the Isuzu Global D-Max and the Isuzu Alterra. The 4x4 MT Global D-Max runs down and ridden in a specially prepared 10-minute long track of natural obstacles, a 45 degree incline and a jungle track. This was followed by a rally and slalom course that further highlighted both the 4x2 Alterra and Global D-Max's responsiveness, balance, overall handling and maneuverability.

The afternoon session saw the Isuzu sales force engaging in team building activities-a series of fun learning activities that tested their problem solving techniques as team like-changing flat tires and bluetooth operation. On the 2008 Isuzu Alterra, as well as a squeeze of their creative talents in a single-making contest based on the Hyzuzu theme.

The combined teams of Isuzu Carpoint de Oro and Isuzu Bacolod received valedictorian for team-building activities, followed by the combo team of Isuzu Pampanga and Isuzu Pampanga. Team Isuzu Davao came in third.

Isuzu Zamboanga ruled the fragile-making contest, combining car and battery with fuel cord keeping. Isuzu Pasig and Isuzu Makati were 2nd and 3rd, respectively.

During the culminating party's costume party, Isuzu Cebu Inc's Joey Limocoon was best "Hero" costume or Princess Cinderella. Isuzu Mandaue's Ronald Lumen was voted as Zorro. At the group category, Isuzu Balintawak's S-Max was judged best, while Isuzu Isabela's authentic Ilocos costume was 2nd best.

The event was further reinforced by the participation of Isuzu's regional headquarters in Thailand, fielding 2-Max specialists who assisted in the development of the 4x4 truck as well as the safety and Global-driving components.

De La Salle Lipa HS '68 reunion

THE DE LA SALLE LIPA HIGH SCHOOL CLASS 1968 silver anniversary (40 years) and class reunion will be held on Feb. 9. The rally promises many celebrations will kick off Feb. 8 at the 8 a.m. at the De La Salle Lipa Campus, followed by the 10 a.m. reunion proper and lunch at the Fernando Air Base Golf Club, Club House. Lipa City (along Marawoy Kahilay). For details, call Moody Hernandez at 632-3883 and Philbert Aquino at (632) 727-5778.

Popular mystic at Astoria Plaza

SET TO KNOW WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR YOU on the "Year of the Rat"? Astoria Plaza invites veteran mystic Judy Lou de Pio to give expert advice on feng shui and to do palm reading, numerology and other forms of reading for free exclusively for those who will avail of Chinese New Year lunch buffet at Cafe Astoria on Feb. 7. The sumptuous lunch buffet which consists of a roasting pig, boasted to pertain free for a really tender meat and crispy skin, dovetailing in a way of dimsum and other all-time favorite Chinese delicacies. Known as the "mystic in the store", Judy Lou de Pio has been giving accurate advice to some of the country's most popular movie personalities. Her predictions are heard over Monster Radio FM 93.1 every Thursday and she has also anchored "Conversations with Angels", a radio program which aired three years on the former DWKC-AM station. And as a regular guest of TV shows, like "Magandang Buhay Pinoy", "Young Hot", and "Go" among others. Aside from feng shui, palm/hand card reading and numerology, de Pio also does reading, being a certified Advanced Pranic Healer. Its consultation at Astoria Plaza's Cafe Astoria and Sauna is an exciting celebration this Chinese New Year. The Chinese lunch buffet is offered until Feb. 8 at 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and is priced at P750++. Judy Lou de Pio will do her "reading" on Feb. 7 from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. only. For reservations, call Astoria Plaza at 687-1111 ext. 8064 and 8065.

BUSINESS

Wellex to develop 3,700-ha mine site in Surigao

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

WELLEX MINING CORP., a subsidiary of the Cotabato-based Wellex Group, recently signed an operating agreement to develop and operate a 3,700-hectare mineral site on Bonagat Island in Surigao held by Virta Bauxite Corp.

In a statement, the company said the agreement was signed on Jan. 17, 2008.

Wellex T. Sinchiabon, president and chief executive officer of Wellex Mining, said the group was looking at a large-scale operation as the said property was covered by a Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) granted by the government.

Sinchiabon also said the group was preparing for a full exploration of the mine site after initial surveys showed the site was rich in gold, nickel and chromite.

Wellex Mining, through sister company Wellex Petroleum, already has applications in Batanes, Palawan, covering an area of 5,700 ha that contains nickel and chromite. It is also looking at another 18,000 ha in Eastern and Western Samar containing coal.

Wellex is aggressively developing the said mine sites for its first exploration will be in the west, he said.

The development of the mining sector is included in the government's medium term development plan, which some 3400 metric tons in investments and 3,000 new jobs are expected to be generated.

Good weather seen boosting rice, corn production in Q1

Yield per hectare, areas planted to these crops expanding

By Arny B. Reyes

THE COUNTRY'S RICE AND corn farmers anticipate a rosier first quarter with conditions seen doing due mainly to a favorable weather condition.

According to a Bureau of Agricultural Statistics report, rice production is seen to reach 3.878 million metric tons in the first quarter of the year, up by 4.19 percent from 3.677 million MT a year ago.

Corn output during the quarter is expected to hit 2.01 million MT, up by 10 percent from 1.764 million MT in the same period last year.

"The first quarter looks promising due also to increased awareness and increased use of hybrid and certified seeds from Guimbang Masiganang Ani Ikaw Program program," the BAS said.

All the projected first production, 3.133 million MT will come from irrigated farms and the rest from rain-fed areas.

The BAS said areas planted to rice were seen to rise by 3.37 percent to 3.098 million hectares from 3.042 million he last year.

Yield per hectare is seen at about 3.62 MT, up from 3.53 MT last year.

Cagayan Valley is expected to be the top rice producer in the first quarter with 704,440 MT, to be followed by Central Luzon with 516,813 MT.

The BAS said prospects were also bright for corn production.

"All regions are optimistic of good corn harvests for the period in anticipation of a sustained use of hybrid seeds under the GMA Gen Program, the production impact of the Philippine Council for Agriculture and Forestry's program of planting corn under corporate farm and good market prices," the BAS said.

Yellow corn production in the first quarter is seen at 1.516 million MT while that of white corn is expected to reach 492,000 MT.

According to the BAS report, the harvest area for corn is expected to grow by 11 percent in the first quarter to 716,000 ha from 643,000 ha in the same period last year.

The average corn yield is seen to improve to 2.81 MT per hectare from 2.81 MT also in last year.

GEOGRACE SHAREHOLDERS' MEET

Geograce Resources Philippines chair Renato S. Puno (center) reports to shareholders during their annual meeting the firm's expanded mineral portfolio and the steps executed so by the company with mining giant BHP Billiton and mining contractor Leighton. With him are Geograce president Jerry Acuggog (left) and Geograce Management Hongkong Ltd. chair Michael Dohmeier (right).

Gov't planning to issue VAT rebate coupons

By Abigail L. Ho

INSTEAD OF REDUCING OR SCRAPPING the 12-percent value-added tax on power and fuels, the government is now considering the issuance of VAT rebate coupons to low-income consumers.

Speaking at the orientation program of the Energy Summit yesterday, President Macapagal-Arroyo said that since a cut in VAT would require legislation, it was worth considering a 100-billion-peso scheme that would alleviate the burden of lower-income consumers and not require an act of Congress.

She said the VAT rebate coupon scheme, proposed by Congressmen Del Mar Puno Puno and Del Pilar Pulido Fuad Gonzalez, was worth exploring.

"I was thinking that this is something we have to study further between Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes and the Department of Justice. Perhaps, instead of a VAT reduction for the lower-income consumers of electricity, what is a VAT rebate? Because they can present their coupons and then when the coupons are surrendered to the government, the government can refund [them to the] ... the coal.

To ensure that the scheme would not adversely affect the government's revenue collection targets, Ms Arroyo said the government could cut its share of the royalties from the Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power Project as well as proceeds from the sale of National Power Corp.'s assets to finance the program.

Mindoro group Sagong Alyansang Mangingisda earlier said that removing the 12-percent VAT on fuel products and electricity would greatly benefit the masses, giving many their 40th anniversary dinners instead of the additional income of P225 a day.

According to the group's estimates, the scrapping of the VAT would benefit 2.1-2.8 million people, representing the families of jeepney drivers all over the country.

Apart from the jeepney drivers, Reyes said close to 500,000 tricycle drivers would likewise enjoy an additional P195 a day if the TRT-issued products would be scrapped.

Household spending would also go down, Reyes said, as the price of liquefied petroleum gas would go down by as much as P50 per 11-kilogram cylinder, representing a savings of P169 a month.

In the provinces and some cities poor households, Reyes said households would spend less on kerosene—which they use for lighting and for cooking—could decrease by around P20 a month, benefiting 9.4 million households or 47 million to 56.4 million individuals.

Data from Ibon Databank group Pamalakaya, meanwhile, showed that the removal of the VAT on oil would result in lower fuel prices for the 377,000 motorized banca operating nationwide.

Roofing, steel company seeks new rehab rules

By Roland W. Dennings

THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST MANUFACTURER of coated roofings and other steel sheets yesterday asked Congress to pass a law on corporate rehabilitation, saying that current "flawed" rules left companies vulnerable to predatory takeovers.

In a letter to Senators Edgardo J. Angara and Juan Ponce Enrile, Steel Corp. of the Philippines said the current rules would "ill avoid by unscrupulous parties, inflate many otherwise good companies whose only problem is temporary illiquidity."

Angara and Enrile are the chair and vice chair, respectively, of the Senate committee on banks, financial institutions and economics.

Antonio M. Lorenzana, SCP chief operating officer, said the interim rules were flawed in that creditors are allowed to use internally-crafted rehabilitation of debtor company without having a clear rationale on what "financial distress of" means.

Also, the rules do not specify minimum qualifications of a judge tasked to handle the rehabilitation cases; allows the petitioner to submit the rehabilitation plan without the concurrence of creditors holding two-thirds ownership regardless of qualifications; provides that a rehabilitation plan was immediately executory once approved by a judge.

"We have been informed that there are many other companies complaining against these flawed rules," Lorenzana said in a statement. "What industries need is a new law with sound provisions and which balances the interests of both debtors and creditors."

Lorenzana said there was a relevant bill filed in the Senate but this has yet to be reported out even for first reading.

Ferdinand S. Topacio, managing partner of the Topacio Law Office which represents SCP, said a law on corporate rehabilitation would hopefully set standards before a creditor initiated rehabilitation is initiated.

"Under the interim rules, any creditor who has a 20-percent exposure in a company may seek rehabilitation," Topacio said. "This gives a wide latitude for abuse of the rules."

According to Lorenzana, SCP has explored about half of the domestic market for coated roofings since it started operations in 1999.

In the mid-1990s, the company borrowed some P1.1 billion to finance construction of its integrated plant in Bulacan, but the Asian financial crisis blasted the firm's debt burden.

"SCP had asked for moratorium of principal payments to [its] ... creditors ... but our creditors led by Banco de Oro took the chance to ... to ... to ... rehabilitation starting last September," Lorenzana said.

MOTORING
Editor Cesar D. Maglonsong

2008 Corolla Altis: Evolving a step up

By Yeng R. Salazar

AFTER SHIPPING OVER 32 million owners around the world and undergoing nine "generational" changes, the Toyota Corolla is ready to take another step up in the evolutionary ladder.

So, 42 years after the first Corolla came out of the assembly line worldwide, the 10th generation Corolla Altis makes its debut in the Philippines in March. And having an ear attentive to the overall look one sees, be described as sportier, but essentially. That seems contradictory at first, but read on and you'll get the picture.

It may not look as sporty as the 5-door Corolla Auris hatchback, the new sheet you will see in Europe and Japan, but at least the 10th generation Altis is sportier than its local predecessors.

New overall dimensions

It is longer, wider and with an elevation, riding on a platform (the 1.6- and 1.8-liter) use the same.

With some modifications in suspension, steering and key engine parts, it shares new overall dimensions: length of 4,540 mm (from 4,530), width of 1,760 mm (from 1,755), and height of 1,465 mm (from 1,480). It now has a wider footprint as well: 1,535 mm at the front, from the previous 1,480, and the rear at 1,525 mm from 1,480.

Surprisingly, reduced overall measurements have resulted in a more spacious interior length of 1,890 mm (from 1,840), width of 1,450 mm (from 1,390). The exception here is the interior height, which has been slightly reduced (1,195 mm from 1,200). Still, Toyota designers have ensure that they really have the headroom at the front and rear have not been sacrificed.

More excitement for the driver

Performance-wise, the new Altis promises more excitement for the driver. From hydraulic steering, the 1.8E-grade(MT) and 1.8G-grade (MT/AT) have electric power steering (EPS) to support to make sharp turns on narrow streets easier.

All grades of the new Corolla Altis have as standard the anti-lock brake system and airbags. The current available entry model J Grade has an ABS, and only a driver's airbag.

All the automatic transmission come with super ECT (electronic controlled transmission). It is programmed to utilize the best

2008 SO 2

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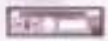
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Driving and living large

FORD Expedition

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

I HAVE TO ADMIT TO CHEWING when Ford Philippines Glen Dong mentioned the word, "Expedition," over the phone last week. Admittedly, biases and preconceived notions about certain cars are difficult to suspend, even when one sees them for a living.

It is hard to forget a six-month spell, years ago, when this writer had to fuel a first generation 5.4-liter Triton V8 specimen. It felt like personally operating a petroleum company, honestly. At some point, every orange surrender to courtesy smile started looking on the attacker it got that bad.

Better than the first?

It is now two generations later, a long period of time by any process of automotive evolution and even the person of cars can change a lot over 18 years. Is the third-generation Expedition any better than the first? Let's just say that the 2008 Ford Expedition experience is generally a familiar one.

The first five minutes with the current model Expedition were eventful to say the least. Moments before the SUV was to be released from the dealership, primitives from an adjacent school threw a perfectly aimed stern cup of an unidentified, mystery goop at the Expedition. Said cocktail bounced off the roof of the SUV, exploded on the windscreen and finished its brilliant path on the truck's massive hood. The smell, memories later, confirmed what was to the cup.

The social commentary of that attack upends volumes on the high-profile public perception of the Expedition, invention grabbing because of its sheer, impolitic size and likely calculated by a clientele just as discreet, it makes perfect sense why trained teenagers would target this vehicle ahead of a parking lot crammed with dozens of other cars. Maybe the juvenile delinquents were hoping to score a hit on a politician, a show-biz personality or some important business tycoon? You will catch the consequences of getting noticed big-time, I guess. Maybe that's what security details are for?

Power

Behind the wheel of this car, it is hugely fun but lacked engine grunt never seen with all the Bush, Enduro and Fuso. The Expedition's engine numbers border on Indonesia actually seemingly overzealous for whatever road conditions that the Philippines can throw at it. The applaud 5.4-liter V8 puts out 300 bhp and almost 500 Nm of torque, making forward acceleration is anything but subtle. The cars engine power is shifted through by the massive weight of the vehicle, one and a half tons when completely and close to three tons with a complement of five adults and cargo. That's heavy in any book.

Drivers will still have to deal with the typically untroubled drive that blankets the large American SUV segment. If a pass could be carved every time the words lean-like and wallowing were used to describe this segment, the BIR would score some part of that action.

Forget trying to push aggressively down a twisty segment of tarmac in this car, as it pays a terrible toll to the laws of physics in traffic, patience is also a critical virtue as the middle and height of the Expedition makes it an terrible as an Edsa bus. Hitting and dying in congestion can be done but it is an accident waiting to happen.

Passenger seat

The seat from where to enjoy the Expedition the most is that of the passenger's. If space and crossover comforts are on top of your automotive wish list, there look no further than this large, leather bound, and power everything interior. Some might find the ride of this super-sized SUV a tad bouncy but that is something that probably can be solved by changing tires, shocks and springs. For the sake of comfort, this is a solution worth considering for if one is considering spending a lot of time in the rear seats of this Ford.

There is a cluster segment out there that demands a reliable like the Ford Expedition, there are quite a few on the road. High profile size and looks, well-known running costs and engine, plush suspension ranges be what every look for. There may a lot about the types of people who buy these cars. They know what they want and have the back balances to back with their choices, no matter what the throws in their direction.

2008 Corolla Altis: Evolving a step up

From page B3.1

THE NEW Corolla Altis

COROLLA ALTIS

gear in relation to the road conditions. The features in the current model is only available in the 1.8 variant. All automatic models have multi-mode transmission (sequential manual-shift with 4-speed gate-type automatic transmission (the multi-mode sequential) is available in the 1.8 V-grade.

Full-model change

The new full-model change Altis starts with 15-inch rims, with the 16-inch rims for the high grade. The current entry level and mid-grade variants have 14- and 15-inch rims, respectively, for the high grade.

The new Altis has three grades, two engines and five variants. The high-end V grade is 1.8- and 1.6-liter automatic transmission, the G grade at 1.8-liter automatic and manual transmissions, and the entry level E grade at 1.6-liter manual transmission. Color options are gray metallic, medium silver metallic, silver metallic, beige metallic, black mica and super white.

It features 8-way power seats that can be adjusted three to the millimeter, woodtrimmed with the tilt and telescopic steering. It has steering switches for control by the audio system and multi-information display (MID). The MID shows current and average fuel consumption, cruising range, average speed, elapsed time and fuel unit changeover. The V-grade has a DCP (DOT) security feature for the MID for the standard mistakes.

It has a two-level glove box, cloth holders for the front and rear passengers, and as much as 21 separate storage compartments placed throughout the cabin. Trunk spaces guarantee the storage of as much as four golf bags, which can be maximized further if 60:40-split rear seats are folded completely.

The 4 cylinders, in line 16-valve DOHC VVT-i engine offers maximum output of 132 ps/6,000 rpm and maximum torque of 170Nm/4,200 rpm for the 1.8-liter variant. While the 1.6-liter variant offers maximum output of 109 ps/6,000 rpm and maximum torque of 145 Nm/4,400 rpm.

MacPherson strut front suspension and rear torsion beam are implemented for better handling stability and driving comfort. Sporty 16-grade 16-inch alloy wheel design is available for the V-grade while 7-spoke 15-inch alloy wheels are available for the G and E grades.

Safety features

Active safety features include Antilock Brake System with Electronic Brake-Force Distribution and Brake Assist, combined with the 15-inch front and rear disk brakes for better braking response.

Passive safety features include standard Toyota Global Outstanding Assessment (GOA) body structure, dual SRS airbags (for V-grade), and Whiplash Injury Lessening (WIL) Concept front seats.

The 2008 Corolla Altis will be available in the 26 Toyota dealerships by March.

In its 42-year history, the Corolla has been the sedan of choice for 31 million owners in over 140 countries. In the Philippines, the Corolla was one of Toyota's first models to be sold. It has become one of the country's biggest-selling vehicles, with over 170,000 units sold since 1989. The Corolla is manufactured in 16 countries.

Hyundai Pony leaves its mark on South Korea car market

SEOUL—WHEN BANKER LEE hung such items his cheap and aging subcompact car through the streets of Seoul's fashionable district, heads turn. Rapper antics and people can be seen mouthing the words: "It's a Pony."

The Hyundai Pony is nostalgia on wheels for South Koreans who fondly remember the automobile that championed sales at home in the 1970s and '80s and became its first car good enough to export.

Even though the last one rolled off the lines some 20 years ago, the Pony has all but vanished from South Korean streets as consumers cast it aside for the better models they thought the homegrower can now unveil.Lee's Pony stirs and stirs who catch a rare glimpse of one. It is a reminder of a proud time when the country overcame the devastation of the 1950-53 Korean War to propel the global standard goods and mobile class families find it had enough wealth to splurge their first car.

"The Pony brings back so many memories. My neighbors even got choked up when I pull into the apartment parking lot," said Lee, who is 47 is only three years older than his old Pony.

"I have to roll down the windows because my car doesn't have air conditioning. Drivers will pull up to me at lights, roll down their windows and start shouting stories about their Pony." Lee received his Pony for free from a mechanic who leverage to a debt group that encourages consumers to keep cars for more than 10 years.

He refurbished it, restored the country for rare parts and stretched its legs on the highway where its 1,400 cc engine topped out at about 130 kph (80 mph).

"It made quite a racket."

Lee said the Hyundai, a sedan that boasts a powerful V4 engine, advanced engineering and a stylish interior, shows how far Hyundai has come in a generation.

Along with its affiliated Kia Motors Corp., Hyundai is the world's sixth-largest automaker.

"When we were developing the Pony, we didn't have that much technology. Now, we have a strong capability of engineering so we can develop any car we want," Ambrose said it is possible to OEM of the Genesis sharing out a large chunk of the luxury car market.

Its biggest impact may be paving to win a reputation born with the Pony of Hyundai producing inexpensive cars for the lower end of the market to one that reflects its current status of making reliable, high-quality vehicles, they said.

"The Genesis will play an important role in changing Hyundai's image, which will result in higher sales of its South Hyundai makes and Santa Fe," said Cho Soo-hong, an auto analyst at Hyundai Securities.

Canadian success, eh?

The Pony was exported to 60 countries. One of its greatest success stories was in Canada, where it was the top-selling imported car in 1984 despite an almost advertising budget and almost no brand recognition.

Many bought the Pony as a second car, seeing it as an improved version of a Japanese vehicle. Canadian media and

GENESIS

Fast lane to Baguio

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

WITH THE PRICE OF OIL SOARING, REducing fuel consumption has gained top priority among motorists. Aside from shifting to smaller, fuel-sipping cars, observing a time- and fuel-saving route or destination is the smart thing to do.

And since today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, many of us are beginning to think of Holy Week in Baguio—but bah to the thought of battling the heavy traffic in the bowls of Kennon Road! Happily, the Mactan-Cebu Highway passes close by. Imagine if all we had to do to avoid the hassle by driving to Baguio at night, when there are presumably less tricycles, jeepneys and buses on the road. But you will still encounter cargo trucks since many of these travel at night.

Alternate route

There is another way to easily go from point-to-point, some Automobile Association Philippines (AAP) members and other Metro Manila-based motorists who frequent Baguio discovered an alternate route that skips Hacienda Luisita's sleeping streets in Tarlac and the towns of Carmen and Urdaneta in Pangasinan which are often clogged with traffic. It involves turning the MacArthur Highway at Concepcion, Tarlac and passing through Cayapa, Rosales and Asingan before returning to the highway in Binalonan, Pangasinan.

AAP rally navigator Jun Espino, who surveyed the alternative route, says it has less traffic because it is a secondary road. But it is a paved road kept in good condition maybe because it includes Asingan, the Pangasinan hometown of former President Fidel V. Ramos.

Pros and cons

A secondary road has its pros and cons. Its upside is that it is not usually crammed by buses and cargo trucks, which means that you are not delayed by slow-moving, similar-belching behemoths. Another advantage is that it is sparsely populated, which means less chances of small children or jaywalkers darting across your path.

Its downside is that it is more scenic than MacArthur Highway, has agricultural aspects such as hand tractors-driven rural vehicles, which travel slower than cargo trucks; impassable stretches covered by paisley drying under the sun, also grass and red chili peppers (ating *labuyo*) and, of course, the ever-present horde of motorcycles (which have replaced the jeepneys as the kings of the road).

Tricycles

But that matters motorcycles also vacuum the MacArthur Highway, although they are banned therefrom. Tricycle drivers hit the highway because there are not enough secondary roads in the provinces for them. Anyway, as they point out, they have the right of way since they live in and belong to the towns where they ply their routes while motorists driving to or from Baguio are only outsiders and travelers.

Another downside of the alternate route is that unlike Macarthur Highway, there are few—if any—fast food chains and service stations where you can grab a bite, load gas, freshen up and/or take a leak. What's more, it's not safe at night as parts of the route are unlighted and extremely dark with few road signs. Motorists can easily miss a turn and lose their way in unfamiliar territory in the dark. Or be held up by criminal elements.

Longer-shorter

Although the alternate route is some 26 kilometers longer in distance—if you just exit the North Luzon Expressway at Santa Ines and follow the sign "To Concepcion" and then the "To Baguio" signs, Jun Espino claims that the travel time is shorter because you avoid heavy traffic at Luisita, Carmen and Urdaneta. While travel time depends on the time of day, Espino claims that the span is one and a half to two hours for the Concepcion-Binalonan route.

If you exit the NLEX through Mabalacat (see map) and access the alternate route from Bamban, Tarlac to Binalonan, Pangasinan it will be 204 km. Manila-Baguio versus 229 km. Manila-Baguio sticking to MacArthur Highway all the way. The Manila-Baguio map using the Mercedes-Binalonan alternate route prepared by Mark Jalao of AAP's motor sports department shows that from Bamban, you turn right about two kilometers after the Shell station on the left side and proceed through Capaya, Rosales and Asingan before returning to MacArthur Highway at Binalonan.

Awaits

Jun Espino's route is longer since from Concepcion, it passes through La Paz and Bayambang before reaching Urdaneta on the way to Cayapo-Rosales-Asingan. But it avoids traffic congestion at the Luisita shopping center and Carmen area in Tarlac and Urdaneta while the Mercedes-Binalonan alternate route avoids only Urdaneta.

For those driving to Baguio during Holy Week, the longer (by distance) but shorter (in travel time) alternate route via Concepcion is recommended. The directions and landmarks will be spelled out in the March 2008 issue of Drive, the newsletter distributed free to AAP members.

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TODAY'S ROMPER STOMPER: The short, bottomless who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.

TRANSPORT TRIVIA By Emerson Cena

FAQs on vanity license plates

AFTER OUR TOPIC ON PASSing license plates last week, a number of e-mails reached boy-toss shooting inquiring on a number of issues ranging from ownership, replacement in questions on reservation of vanity plates.

A friend of his former had the added if he could give it as a valentine's gift for his partner this love month. And the answer is absolutely yes! How about a plate which says "Marry me"? It could—but be a perfect takeoff of an engagement proposal.

Here are some of the answers to frequently asked questions on vanity plates we gathered from the Land Transportation Office:

Q: How much is the cost of the vanity license plate? Does it vary?

A: The Limited edition is pegged at a floor price of P80,000 by public auction. The Premium and Select editions are fixed at P15,000 and P30,000, respectively.

How long can we secure the vanity plate?

Indefinitely, that all requirements are in order, it would take five working days if you're within Metro Manila. In the provinces it might take a little longer.

Where can we apply for a vanity license plate?

All motorists may apply for the vanity license plates at the LTO District Office, Mid-Commerce Towers on East Avenue in Quezon City. Or log on to its website at http://www.lto.gov.ph

Will duplicate alpha-numeric combinations be allowed?

Available alpha-numeric combination shall only be issued once for every motorist applicant. It will be on a first-come, first-serve basis. No repetition or duplicate will be allowed.

In the event that a vanity plate is destroyed, vandalized or lost, how can we get a replacement?

Logically, this will be replaced by the same alpha-numeric combination after payment of a cer-

tain replacement fee. However, the motorist shall be given an alternative to replace his alpha numeric combination upon payment of the required fee, the cost of which shall be based on new vanity plate. The old vanity plate, the LTO says, shall already be placed on stocks/storage and can no longer be retrieved.

If I still have a valid noncommercial plate, can I avail of the vanity license plate?

No. If you did not disclose that you have a valid commercial plate and you issued the vanity plate at the time of the motor vehicle as per-registered, your vanity plate and commemorative plate might be confiscated and a fine will be imposed if caught.

Can a foreigner acquire or secure a vanity plate for tourist?

No, the issuance of vanity license plates is limited only to the Philippines and can only be issued to a motorist with a registered motor vehicle.

Can I give the vanity plate as gift?

Yes, provided that the recipient of the gift is a registered owner of a motor vehicle.

I bought a new motor vehicle but it was not yet issued a license plate. Can I avail of the vanity plate?

No, vanity license plate can only be issued to a motorist with a registered motor vehicle already issued a regular LTO license plate.

Can I reserve my favorite vanity plate number?

Yes, a payment in the amount of P1,000 shall be required as reservation fee valid only for 30 days. If unclaimed after 30 days, the said amount shall be subject to forfeiture in favor of the government.

SOURCE: LTO

Ride responsibly, Kawasaki says

THE GROWING POPULARITY OF MOTORcycles among Filipinos has prompted one motorcycle manufacturer Kawasaki to aggressively promote safe riding.

The newest Kawasaki TV commercial released by top executives of the brand, in the advertisement, the motorcycle riding hero fights four villains and succeeds because he is protected by his helmet. The concentrated movement is inspired by popular Japanese movie action heroes series like Shinobi and Masked Rider Black. The message "May ligtas sa pangarap ang suko-hel-met" ends the thirty 30-second ad.

"In this ad, we want to illustrate why wearing a helmet is important. Impossible without sounding too preachy, it is light but it drives the point that when you ride a motorcycle, whether it's the powerful Ninjaka 175 or the power ride underbone ZX230, it is your responsibility to protect yourself by all means. The most obvious way to be wearing a helmet," said Kawasaki GM Rodel Bibiso.

DOT standard helmets

However, Kawasaki emphasizes that not all helmets are created equal. There are many quality helmets in the market that cannot fully withstand the rigors of crash impact. Kawasaki recommends riders get "DOT standard" helmets or helmets that have passed the stringent requirements of US Department of Transportation. DOT tests helmets for shape retention, impact reduction, shell penetration and peripheral vision.

"Safety is the biggest benefit in sturdy, light and able to spread the load of impact without deforming too much. That is why Kawasaki endorses DOT-approved helmet brands because they are tested specifically for durability and impact performance," Bibiso said.

WEARING a helmet is the single most effective way of reducing head injuries and fatalities resulting from motorcycle and bicycle crashes, according to WHO Philippines representative Dr. Soe Myint (L)

LTO, MMDA sign interconnectivity system

THE LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE AND the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority recently signed the LTO-MMDA interconnectivity project which will allow the MMDA to alert LTO personnel of violations committed by motorists nationwide by placing an alarm on the database system of the LTO used by the apprehended motorists in the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) system.

The project will see the MMDA Integrated Law Enforcement System (ILES) and the LTO database that will allow MMDA to interconnect to the DOTC-LTO IT System online and real-time. The facility will be developed and maintained by the IT proponent of the CIIS, Interdom Corp.

Start with driver's licenses

Initially, the project will cover only driver's licenses and will be eventually expanded to include the registrations of motor vehicles, the ILES facility will also be developed for collation or confirmation of apprehension and violation information. Access will be available for all MMDA apprehending officers as well as for the motoring public.

Upon the implementation of the CIIS-MMDA Interconnectivity project, the MMDA will use the MMDA-ILES to create alarms on specific drivers licenses or motor vehicles online. This proposed new system is faster than the manual manual process and uploading is available in the MMDA anytime which will enable the MMDA to upload apprehensions real-time.

The verification of alarms will be incorporated in the LTO front-ends in the application and renewal of driver's licenses and motor vehicle registrations. Any alarmed drivers license or motor vehicle reported by the MMDA and which has been uploaded into the LTO IT system, will not be processed by the LTO system will notify their that the MMDA is in possession of the driver's license or motor vehicle involved.

The apprehension of alarms will be incorporated in the LTO mark-ups in the application and renewal of driver's licenses and motor vehicle registrations. Any alarmed drivers license or motor vehicle reported by the MMDA and which has been uploaded into the LTO IT system, will not be processed by the LTO system will notify their that the violations or apprehension has been first settled with the MMDA.

A new level of discipline

Manila Jose Simpson assistant vice president for Business Connectivity, stressed that the new interconnectivity scheme was launched primarily to promote a new level of discipline for Filipino motorists and to set a precedence that through technology aligned and cross-functional government agencies can in fact work in tandem for a safer land transportation system.

Under this new scheme, traffic violators apprehended by the MMDA can readily disregard the traffic violation tickets issued to them since their driver's licenses will not be confiscated. The project further ensures that the authority of the MMDA is not disregarded by resolving this evident constraint, therefore enabling the MMDA to effectively enforce its mandated functions.

MOTORSCOPE

Ford greets new year with 'Starter Set' promo

FREE GROUP PHILIPPINES OPENS 2008 with a salvo of easy-to-own offers on its complete model lineup. Appealing to non-car-owners, the Fiesta promo offers a host of attractive customized packages including collision, fire and theft insurance, low-down payment, 5-in-1 rental plans for Ford Focus, Escape, Everest, Ranger, Explorer Eddie Bauer and Expedition Eddie Bauer.

For as low as P134,000, or for a down payment plan of P27,000, customers can buy a Ford Fiesta and experience the refreshingly fun that only 2WorldRally Championship-tested car can deliver.

Active weekend warriors can now have their own Ford Escape for as low as P999,999 or for a 3-percent interest 12-month loan and a down payment of P99,999.

Ready-for-action families can now own Ford Everest, recently named "2007 Executive SUV of the Year" in the Car of the Year Awards. They can either avail of discounts for as much as P25,302 or pay a low-down payment of P199,999.

The fearless Ford Ranger, awarded "2007 Pickup of the Year" for both 4WD and 2WD categories, also has an enticing offer: a low down payment of P99,000 for the 2-door and a free bedliner worth more than P10,000 for the 4-dr.

Zero percent interest plans are also available for the Ford Expedition, the ultimate match for the accomplished but also demand-definitive luxury, power, comfort and safety in their vehicles, and the Ford Explorer, America's best-selling SUV.

These special offers will only be available until Feb. 29 at all Ford dealerships nationwide.

Record sales again for BMW Motorrad

BMW MOTORRAD ACHIEVED a new sales record in 2007. After the 100,000-unit mark was sold for the first time in 2006, BMW was able to continue its growth in 2007 with sales of 102,467 units. The record figures represent the peak of BMW Motorrad's ongoing successful course to date.

Once again it was the Western European markets which made the biggest contribution to this outstanding result. With the German market generating the lead, these figures have seen wonderful below those of the previous year (2007: 21,584; 2006: 23,611/-8.6 percent).

However, BMW Motorrad was also able to expand its market leadership both in the market-size (all 100 cc (2007: 25.4 percent, 2006: 19.8 percent) and in the market as a whole (2007: 18.2 percent, 2006: 16.1 percent). The second strongest market for the company was once again Italy with 14,424 units sold, followed by the United States (12,094 units) and Spain (10,552 units).

The most successful model in 2007 was once again the travel enduro bike BMW R 1200 GS together with its sibling model, the R 1200 GS Adventure. Due to the immense model revision, 2007 figures were slightly below those of the previous year as expected (2007: 35,677 units; 2006: 51,136 units).

The BMW Motorrad model program for 2008 is as broadly varied as the wishes and preferences of its customers. In the four worlds of experience Sport, Tour, Urban and Enduro, there are fascinating motorcycles to suit every taste, each supplemented with an extensive range of accessories as well as the matching riding equipment.

In the 1st quarter of 2008, BMW Motorrad celebrates the official start of the season. During this time, the new 2-cylinder models BMW F 800 GS and BMW F 800 GS will see their sales debuts. The market entry of the new medium-category travel enduro BMW F 800 GS, an all-rounder with outstanding off-road and long-distance qualities, is being anticipated with great excitement.

The new BMW R 1200 GS and the new BMW R 1200 GS Adventure are sold as the new 2-cylinder models BMW F 800 GS and BMW F 800 GS will be introduced in the Philippines in 2008. They are available at authorized BMW Motorrad dealers—such as BMW in Alabang and Autohaus BMW in Libis, Quezon City.

Isuzu Crosswind gets a fresh new look

THE 2008 Crosswind's chrome-finished tri-slat center billet grille makes it easily recognizable from the previous editions.

A NEW quarter-vent design and rear spoiler-like rear spoiler with third-brake lamp make the latest Crosswind unique earlier.

By Charles E. Bolton

ISUZU CROSSWIND ASIAN utility vehicle (AUV) has been a strong-selling model for the Japanese diesel carmaker since it was introduced in June 2001.

According to Isuzu Philippines Corp. President Koji Takeda, the Crosswind has averaged a monthly sales total of 948 units last year, which translated to an almost 30-percent share of the AUV market.

"This is a testament of the Crosswind's dependability plus the positive feedback that the market has been receiving from motorists who have bought or driven them," Takeda said.

But with new models coming up from competitors, IPC decided to freshen up the Crosswind lineup for the year.

Understated elegant design

"The Crosswind's latest "understated elegant" design concept will delicately answer more enhancements and reassure Filipino workers and who have huge families to transport in comfort," Takeda described.

Up front, the addition of chrome finish on the center billet grille is instantly recognizable, and adds elegance to the Crosswind's face.

The roof now features new design roof rails for better aerodynamics and functionality.

"At the back, the 2008 Crosswind has a new design spare-tire cover as well as a new design spear-like rear spoiler with third-brake lamp," Takeda said.

"But a complimented by twin combination lamps with chrome garnish that also features a darker-red shade for a more realistic and orderly.

New body colors

The latest Crosswind models also sports new body colors; mercury silver and light blue metallic for the XT; mercury silver and steel black for the ZTL; steel black and light blue metallic for the XRV; and super black, caspian red and cellacte gold for the Sportivo.

The interior also showcases a new two-tone black and beige motif.

"The new Crosswind Sportivo models' steering wheel now has buttons to safety and conveniently control the entertainment system, which is a DEL-G's MP3 audio system with a 6.3-inch LCD monitor for the backup camera," Takeda said.

7-inch monitor

Sportivo's seven-inch wide-screen monitor located at the back of the front unit's headrests have new beige frame.

"Beige color insert is carried over to the seat material, a combination of vinyl and perforated leather," Takeda described.

The Sportivo variant has a special logo stitching on the headrests. The door trim set of a new design featuring a black vinyl center accent for the new design fenders and door bumps) to make them truly the lineup's finest.

Same yet proven engine

All the 2008 Crosswind variants are powered by the same yet proven 2.5-liter turbo direct-injection diesel engine (4JA1-Lizard).

Takeda said the fuel-efficient power-plant is Euro 2-compliant to ensure minimum impact to environment during its years of being driven around.

He also announced that for the first three months after introduction, the prices for the 2008 Crosswind shall be the same as those for the previous models.

Hence, the 2008 Crosswind will initially sell for P778,000 for the manual XL model, P840,000 for the manual XT, P890,000 for the manual ZTL, P879,000 and P1,029 million for the manual and automatic models of the XRV, and P1.070 million and P1.120 million for the manual and automatic versions of the Sportivo.

25 LIFESTYLE
Editor Cielo Baral-Formoso Chief Correspondent Pam Pastor

Xiamen surprise

This is what every foreign trip should be—a journey into the strange and unfamiliar

MARGARET (right) and relatives daily at the Xiamen Petrochemical Industrial Park

By Gracious Tambua
Inquirer Correspondent

XIAMEN, CHINA IS NOT exactly a tourist-friendly city. For starters, most taxi drivers don't speak English. Even the least people speak very little English. Silently asking for an extra pillow is like playing a game of Charades.

But if you speak Mandarin, or can communicate through signs and gestures, Xiamen is a very manageable city.

One of the first things I noticed about the city was how there were very few people in it. At the Xiamen International Airport, there were no lines, whether in immigration or at the security checkpoints. Even on the streets outside, not many people were walking around.

I would later learn that although Xiamen has the same population as Manila, it has a land area around 40 times bigger.

The next day we did the rounds of Xiamen's usual tourist spots. First stop was the Nanputuo Temple, with its structures built over 1,000 years ago during the Tang Dynasty. There were giant rocks with Chinese characters engraved on them, and our tour guide told us to throw coins on the engravings.

A short walk away was Xiamen University in the middle of the campus is also classified as big, with manicured gardens all around. Wallabies however was a big take every flash of sand, clay camphor tree sap, liquid incense sugar, and glutinous rice, it is culturally inappropriate for male attendees to the 67-ton Jiuqu cannon, the largest in the world.

The last stop on our half-day city tour was the Chinese Silk Museum Inc. I believe Interior Quinpot. We were shown how silk was made out of cocoons. We even helped in the making of a silk blanket.

After a Chinese tourist lunch, we headed to Gulangyu ("Drum Wave Islet"). The ferry ride from downtown took a mere ten minutes. I wondered aloud why they just didn't build a bridge to the island. Estherine, our guide, explained that vehicles are forbidden on this islet.

We took a stroll along the paved 4.5-kilometer ring road, along the way there were shops selling dried meat, tea sets and candies, tropical gardens, and colonial villas. The islet's main attraction is the Piano Museum, with its nearly 100 antique pianos.

Filipino performers

That night, our Xiamen friends took us to Seal Bay along Hubin Dong (East) Road. Most of the performers, like in the other bars we visited in Xiamen, were Filipino. Jessa and Pebbi, our Filipino stepsister friends, entertained us to a rendition of Olivia Rojas' old generic hits, which they always sing together. Out of habit, I was looking around for "stage" where the waiter plopped down bowls of melon, kiwi and dragon fruit. I would later learn that this was the standard bar chow.

That night, I didn't wake up with a hangover the next morning. We took a van to the Xiamen Haicang Seibei Park, around 30 minutes away from downtown. There was no entry fee, so we had to walk around the entire area. Zebras, horses, reindeer, kangaroos, and a camel roamed around freely, oblivious to the people gawking at them.

Afterwards, we headed to the arena for the animal show. There was a mountain goat that walked on a tightrope. I thought that the goat had it easily tough until the trainer

FISH nibble away at dead skin cells at Ningqin's Fish Spa

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WITH the AJ Hackett Macau Tower adventure activities, you can either walk or jump off the edge.

NO-LOOK POSE Bungy leads us down a level

BECAUSE of the first-ever overhead cell system, safety is ensured when doing the Skywalk X.

Getting high in Macau

The mere thought of falling at an astonishing 200 km/h and then rebounding at 30 m above the ground paralyzed me

By Miss Mark M. Sablan
Correspondent
Photos by Rosemarie B. Rosen

MACAU Tower Convention and Entertainment Center

I SUBSCRIBE TO THE BELIEF that since life is so short, one must live it to the fullest. This is why I make sure that my every day is packed with productive activities and that I don't waste time by going to its fullness.

I also make it a point to try anything at least once. Scuba diving, snorkeling to the middle of the sea, riding roll bumping, going to Hong Kong all alone when I was a teenager, and joining a cotillion/ball remain. These are just some of the things I've managed to do so far in this lifetime. Definitely not bad for a could-die-any-geek-like-me.

My try-everything principle has indeed enriched my life with various experiences. This is exactly why, a week before I was to fly to Macau for work, and I discovered that I had the option to try Bungy jumping there, I signed up to do it without second thoughts.

In Macau, I was brought to the popular tourist destination known as the Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Center. Apart from boasting casinos, Tower Mall and various restaurants, it also offers exhilarating things to do for the bold and the brave. On the AJ Hackett Macau Tower adventure activities.

AJ Hackett is an entrepreneur from New Zealand who modernized and commercialized Bungy jumping, an activity inspired by the Vanuatu ritual and the Oxford University Longboat Sports Club experimental jumps during the '70s. The extreme sport had since come a long way. Not only are there variations of the sport, it has also gained enormous media exposure on TV shows and even in movies.

Here at Macau Tower, Bungy jumping continued to drive in multi-million tourists craving for more adrenaline rush. I was one of them.

However, when I got to the tower's 61st floor, looked through the glass walls and had a bird's eye view of Macau, my thighs melted like sticks of butter left under the heat of the sweaty sun. I threw the idea of Bungy jumping out the window. Instantly. I had a fear of heights and that it wouldn't be going away any time soon.

Instead of jumping off the edge, I unveiled a more courageous tourist sign up for a Bungy jump, get ready for it and even do the actual jump...while I shrunked every second of it as if it was me doing the jump. Even with AJ Hackett's flawless safety record, I couldn't imagine myself finding the guts to experience the world's highest commercial Bungy jump.

Never mind if I would earn bragging rights or get a souvenir photograph to prove my guts. Never mind if it was for free. The mere thought of falling at an astonishing 200 km/h and then rebounding at 30 m above the ground paralyzed me.

Heart-stopping options

Apart from Bungy jumping, height runner AJ Hackett has also designed over 18 unique adventures in Macau Tower, giving both locals and tourists an alternative form of entertainment in the city. Among them are 61M Climb, a 2-hour event and descent of Macau's highest summit at 338 meters, and Skyjump, Asia's first and the world's highest commercial skydiving descent. There is also Skywalk X, a breathtaking walk around the main tower deck of the tower, at 233 meters above the ground.

Our group of six was offered to do the Skywalk X, and since it did seem a little less intimidating than Bungy jumping, I considered doing it. But while the safety measuring overhead rail system gave me some confidence, especially that others do not my problem when I learned that literally I had to handrails and that to walkway was just 1.5 meters wide.

Half of our group was excited to do it, while the others were wishing for my demise. I tried convincing myself again and again, but every time I looked outside and below, an overwhelming sense of dread liquefied my body's lower half and so I chickened out.

Our brave buddies took their time strolling at the tower's border, one of them even having his picture taken while sitting on the edge. Through out their leisurely walk, all I could do was scrub with clammy hands and a face bursting burnt.

When they finally finished, our companions all admitted that it definitely was a marvel and nerve-racking task on the wild side. They even gave me a tip in case I changed my mind. Don't look down.

Glass-paneled walkway

Our tour guide then introduced us to proceed to the tower's 58th level, which had some glass panels on the floor. When we got there, I took a peek through one of the glass panels and immediately locked away. I felt dizzy and queasy and I didn't want to look back.

All my courageous companions playfully walked on the panels and even stayed there for quite a while, while I couldn't even go near them.

And then a challenge: We had to pose for souvenir pictures near the glass walls, and that meant walking on several glass panels first to get there. I hesitated even more by appearing like an impossibly accomplished task and taking forever doing so (sure, but in all honesty, I really wanted to just do it, but my body was giving me a hard time).

Most I knew how those contestants from "America's Next Top Model" felt like when they had to face their fears of snakes and heights because it was needed in the shoot. Anyway, I ended up at the end of the line, meaning I didn't have to pose further by stepping on more glass panels.

When it was time to go through, I noticed my hands were no longer clammy and my body temperature was back to normal. It was then when I felt a bit of disappointment in myself.

Whatever happened to my try-everything principle? Why couldn't I bring myself to step on some bottomless glass panels on the floor? So while everyone was busy heading to the elevator, I wondered all on enough once again, quickly rushed on a strip of glass panels with shaking legs and then walked back.

All my companions were already waiting inside the elevator. I rushed to join them and I couldn't wait to go down.

For rates, operating hours and more information, visit the Macau Tower website at http://macautower.com/en/engindex.asp.

E-mail the author at missmarksablan@yahoo.com

ALMOST jumping. (Be nice now (post-mothers-of-the-world) commercialized by entrepreneur AJ Hackett

AT NIGHT the Macau Tower is a beautiful sight to behold.

Xiamen surprise

From page C1

A VIEW of Gulangyu Island from the top

required the goat to run around on the lightsaber!

I was hoping that things wouldn't get worse until the trainer appeared on a stand, no bigger than a CD, in the middle of the right rope, and had the goat stand on it, on all its four legs. What's more, the goat did a 360-degree turn on the tiny stand! Now I was a lucky moon bear who conquered ropes without trainer.

An adult moon bear was then carried into the scene. It balanced itself on a rescue, all the while twirling a hula-a-rose in head. After that, the same bear hiked around the canine. On rope, at the end of its routine, it rode tight out of the moon and into the animals' waiting area.

In the afternoon, we headed to the Shangri-La Hotspring Resort 11000 Fujian Road, Huaxiang District. Hot spring water outdoors and indoors for the public is pumped directly to each hot pool. There were around 20 pools, with contents such as milk, pineapple, ginger, green tea, ginseng, aloe vera, lemongrass, dragonfruit and coffee.

I reportedly liked the pools in the Watsonig Hills area, with Chinese motifs in black, yellow wine, and white white color. Of course, there were pools with lavender, rose and lily. The only thing I didn't try was the yellow Curry pool, as I had no desire to smell like chicken curry.

Our hands-down favorite though was The Fish Spa, which had hundreds of koi nipping fishes from Turkey do their free fish concert when the fish started nibbling away at my legs. I closed my eyes, and then it felt as if there were hundreds of needles pricking my skin. It was just a bit unnerving when I opened my eyes and saw hundreds of fish, some almost as long as my fingers, swarming all over me.

Cool gimmick

We topped off the evening with dinner at Lucky Pail (28 Bradford Ld. (Hubin South Road), and drinks at 9th and Ten 2 Bar (Inn Wan Gong Town, Huchuding No. 11, 9th and Ten 2 is right on the western coastline of Gulangyu Island. Watch the strong sea breeze on a winter night, it was literally the "coolest" gimmick ever.

To keep pinch warm, they put out lamps near the tables and distributed blankets. Of course, mugs of beer didn't hurt either.

For shopping, we patronized Zhang Shun Braid, Xiamen's commercial district. Aside from the usual brand-name shops, there were malls along the side streets where you could haggle for discounts. Hats were going for as low as 50 yuan (around $100). The streets outside Xiamen University also sold everything from pets to jackets at student-friendly prices. There's also an SM mall (Jiang Xiao Tan Road), in case you're looking for homesick.

Xiamen's best bargains though, are probably in Electronic City (on South Lakeside Road). Laptops, digital cameras and flash drives sometimes cost just half as much as they do in Manila, making the entire trip worth it if you're into gadgets.

Shopping and eating in Xiamen can be quite affordable. If you know where to look. Also, there's no need to give tips to waiters and drivers, as our friend Candice often reminded us.

All in all, despite the language barrier, a trip to Xiamen can be enjoyable. Just be sure to have the name of the place you want to go written down in Chinese characters, show this to the cab driver, and he'll bring you straight there.

After all, come to think of it, this is what every foreign trip should be—a journey into the strange and unknown.

E-mail the author at grmiron@gmail.com

MAKING friends at the Chimelong Safari Park

Stairway to a new life

From page C1

to their families. However, wherever they go they need to continue their education, so a social worker helps guide them through the process.

Energetic performance

It takes a three to four-hour bus ride from Manila, a two-hour ferry ride then a 30-minute bumpy ride to get to Sitio-ong, which is located in Mindoro. When we arrived, our friends and I were greeted by the kids with an energetic performance called the "Rainbow Mix".

All of them were dressed in sparkly clothes in different colors of the rainbow, which they had dyed and painted themselves. They sang and danced enthusiastically, making us feel at home immediately.

Afterwards, we went to the beach and played icebreaker games such as Jag-of-war. It's a lot of fun, I had made some best friends.

During the short three days that I spent at Sitio-ong, I got to know and befriend many of the kids.

Glynn (down here) had a smile plastered across his face. Angelo, the cutest and most innocent-looking kid, was always obsessed with the number 23. Raymond was caring and so much fun. One day on the beach, we were all joking around and we named him as the sand. Jonathan was with me in team red. Ely, Kevin and I had a perpetual "bad (ide) good fish" x4e, which helped us bond with each other.

Everyone was good at sports, and we played beach volleyball with them every day. A bunch of boys started calling them-selves the "macho men" group, and every

ANGELO and his cute dog-ears

member was named "Bad" for them to remind number 8 was hilarious. Whether it was hiking up a gorgeous waterfall or being taught how to braid friendship bracelets by the kids or how to make cupcakes, I had an amazing time.

It amazes me how, through all their troubles, these kids always keep a smile on their face. The visionary foundation children are striving and resilient. Despite the tremendous odds challenges that had confronted, I really admire them.

On our last day with them, we signed each other's shirts and celebrated the new friendships we'd made with slightly tearful good byes. In the end, we were all just kids, there weren't any social or economical barriers or prejudices that got in the way of our friendships.

This was our weekend that I'd treasure and remember for the rest of my life.

Visit www.stairwayfoundation.org/Eng/Block_Angels/blockangels_jovenson.htm. E-mail the author at iamjovenson@msn.com

UNSCHOOLEE is the newest graphic T-shirt line to hit Manila's street wear scene.

Hot and hip graphic shirts

IT'S COOL TO GO TO SCHOOL nowadays; a group of well-versed young entrepreneurs does not it's even more hip to be freeschool.

Unschooled is the newest graphic T shirt line to hit Manila's street wear scene. Tired of the boring icons produced and offering Tshirts in the market today, Unschooled came up with fresh concepts that dare to be atypical yet universal.

The line was conceptualized and created by four guys with no background in fashion design or the fashion industry.

Armed with just sheer passion for graphics, it became their mission to drive Manila's fashion consciousness with their shirts as well, an ensemble priced and designed with flair.

Chino Lui Pio, one of the founders of the fledgling label, says that "wearing a T-shirt is our thing, but wearing our shirt gives you the right look and the right attitude makes all the difference."

The group also carries the "Skratz" shirts, or street commonly known as the "Stronger" shirts popularized by Kanye West, which comes in a wide range of colors for hipsters everywhere. The label will soon be expanding with its own line of hoodies and a girl's line.

The t-shirts are exclusively available in

the group's Multiply account, www.unschooledclothing.multiply.com.

The level time to get "unschooled" is soon since each design is limited to only 50 shirts each.

VISIT unschooled clothing.multiply.com

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Disadvantaged kids find a new home in Mindoro-based Stairway Foundation

HAPPY group

LAST WEEK I VISITED THE Stairway Foundation. Founded by Monica Ilay and Lars Jorgensen in 1990, it is a facility that helps former street children from ages 10-17 to attain a brighter future.

Many of the children that come to Stairway have had difficult lives living on the streets. Some have been involved in alcohol and drugs, while others have been abused or come from dysfunctional families or juvenile prisons.

The street children have the opportunity to join a one-year program to gain practical living skills at the Foundation. In the first few months, their basic needs—food, soap and clothing—are provided for free. Then as they mature into the program, the kids are expected to start earning for themselves so that they can provide for their basic necessities.

Through this, they learn to provide for themselves with honesty and self-respect. No more begging, stealing or gambling. For their livelihood, they are also taught various crafts such as creating dream catchers and intricately woven friendship bracelets. They learn tie-dye techniques and even henna tattoo skills.

Every week, the kids are put into groups and have chils washing, cleaning and kitchen duties assigned to them. Being my about story I got to help clean the dishes and set tables.

There are two classrooms for the children, divided into higher and lower learning levels. The classrooms are colorfully decorated, and each kid has his own desk.

There is also a "high tech" room filled with computers where the children are taught computer skills. To help deal with the violence and trauma most of these street kids have experienced, Stairway offers regular workshops and seminars that deal with all forms of abuse and children's rights.

Hope and love

Monica and Lars Jorgensen both live on the grounds, and have two kids. Lars is Danish and when Stairway was being built, he went to his old high school to raise money.

The high schoolers painted cheesecakes and gold and did pancakeraces, baked batchels of cookies and raised funds to give Stairway a headstart. The Foundation is an independent, nonprofit and non-governmental entity.

The Stairway philosophy says that everyone needs love and hope. Without it, many street kids desperately turn to drugs to escape from reality. On my own, my eyes swam a photo gallery of children.

We saw kids walking barefoot on garbage dumps and young girls with glue bags over their noses hanging around in restaurants. We saw pictures of a boy with scabies in a pool of dirty water.

In 2004, Stairway produced the animated film "Daughter, a Story of Hope." It was widely distributed throughout Manila and translated into Hindi and Bahasa (for showing in Cambodia and Indonesia).

In 2006, "A Good Boy," Stairway's second animated film, was made. This one was about pedophilia.

Both films were chilling in that it is not the child's fault when he or she is abused, and it encourages kids to go to a trusted adult if anything inappropriate is happening to them.

These films are extremely useful, because many children feel guilty or feel as if it's their fault when they are being abused.

I watched the play "The Cracked Mirror," a gripping portrayal of life on the streets and child sexual abuse. I was shocked to learn that the talented cast had also gone through these experiences.

But now, they have the courage to speak up about it and teach others. Monica Ilay also wrote and compiled a book of short stories titled "Black Angels, Street Children Realities," which vividly depicts life on the streets for these children.

Stairway provides a year-long training program. Then the kids must find a new home and transition into the larger world. They are faced with possibly the most difficult decisions in their life. They can either move on to another organization or go back

(CONTINUED ON C5)

PAULINE takes with the Stairway kids

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Friendster, Asian edition

Because of the site's popularity in the region, its developers have decided to create more innovations targeted to this market

Text by Bianca Cuaresma
INQ7 Correspondent
Photos by Ryan Fernandez

FEW COULD HAVE PREDICTED the success of social networking sites (Friendster refers to users as Friendsters) when it was launched in 2003.

While the idea of social networking sites wasn't exactly new (similar sites such as MySpace and Livejournal were already quite popular), the idea of catching up with long-lost friends, old classmates and distant relatives became an instant hit, causing millions of users to join Friendster to add up friends and acquaintances on the site.

"Add me on Friendster" became a popular catchphrase, and soon enough, rarely ever-used Yahoo! and Hotmail accounts were replaced by Friendster accounts. Five years after it was launched, Friendster became the No. 1 social network site in the world, with over 90 million registered users.

Although other sites such as Facebook and Multiply have since joined the bandwagon and taken a hefty share of the market, there's no denying that Friendster is still a force to contend with, despite its purportedly more "prog-store" image.

According to David Jones, vice president for global marketing, Friendster was initially launched as a social experiment. "But now, we're bigger than other sites such as Wikipedia, Amazon, EBAY and Craigslist," he said.

"Friendster is very popular in Asia, especially here. Our biggest percentage of users is from the Philippines, clocking in with 19 percent of the site's traffic."

Big things

Because of the site's popularity in Asia, the developers have decided to create more innovations targeted to the Asian market.

"We're teaming up with lots of big things," said Jeff Roberts, marketing and public relations director of Friendster. "We can blog; we're now offering the site in several languages. We used to be a purely English site, but it's now available in simplified and traditional Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Spanish. Even indonesia accounts for 60 percent of the language used on the Internet."

Jones added, "Another innovation is the

FRIENDSTER D2

JON AVILA, Gaby dela Merced, Mitzi Navarro, Bianca King, Champ Lin-Pin, Mo Twister and Katrina Halili

GOOFING OFF Real-life couple Champ and Bianca

Friendster, Asian editi

JAKILI with Friendster's [illegible] and David Jones

From page D1

developer's program, which allows other people to build features for Friendsters through application programs interfaces (API). But we still make sure that these programs don't spread viruses to all our users."

However, what has created many in the Friendster community is introduction of the fan profiles.

Jones said, "This feature allows celebrities such as bands, singers, models, writers, photographers, athletes, TV shows, politicians and the like to be able to communicate with the community without having to overlap with people they really know."

"Fan profiles allow them to separate friends from fans," Jones said, citing examples such as Asian pop star Bianca King, who exclusively offered her first Chinese language album to her fans around the world through streaming format on Friendster.

Other innovative Friendster users can expect in the coming year include more Asian languages, more APIs for developers, enhancements for fan profiles and mobile-accessible Friendster.

Keeping in touch

Local show biz personalities have expressed their support for Friendster, saying that the site helped them keep in touch with their fans.

Actress Bianca King said, "I actually don't have a Friendster profile yet, but I'm excited to get started so I can get in touch with my fans and answer their mail. It's a good way to let them know whatever I have coming up, like a movie or show."

Bianca sees singer Divi Navarro and Halo Eastman Champ Lin-Pin agreed, saying the site has helped them promote their upcoming shows and advances to their listeners.

"I get to know a lot of the fans and become friends with them through my site," said sexy actress Katrina Halili. "There are quite a lot of fake accounts that carry my name on the site, but I'm flattered more often than not because they really get carried away and take pains to update their site and act like they're me. But the fan profiles really help."

"Friendster is really all about helping people keep in touch," said Inday. "Fan profiles and new languages are just a small part of it. Stick with us, and you'll see what we have coming up."

E-mail the author at [illegible]@yahoo.com

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Sparkling love stories

WE RECEIVED A BARRAGE OF INVITES to the Chordy Lovapalooza Food Fest and IRAN Rant and Roll promo. All the invites were sweet and left no hankering for nonsense to smooch, but this week, three stories in particular let us know how joy-cool love can really be, winning for three couples a diamond-studded necklace each from Chordy Crystal Fiesta and free invites to the year's star-studded Chordy Lovapalooza Food Fest.

123 days and counting

Long-distance relationships will require an enormous amount of patience and determination to work, especially for two young people in the prime of their lives. Steven Lopez and Cedric Tolosa tell us about their amazing love story.

"Last Oct. 5, Cedric told me that he had to join his family in the United States for at least five years. Since then, we've been sending each other every day for the past 123 days. We celebrated our first Christmas together last year, and he gave me a promise ring. In exchange, I gave him a framed copy of nine photos that remind him of his how-times-here. This photo was taken in Stanford on what will probably be our last travel adventure together.

"We had so many firsts together. He was with me when I first drove along Edsa at about 40 kph. I can't forget how he was laughing the entire time because everyone was probably driving 120-plus. He first ordered me drunk once to take me to Tabacalera, where, they say, wherever you take it the cocktails here is Hennessy, Bailey, Cointreau and Tequila, too, and when he comes home from the US, we'll see more of the world together."

Friends and lovers

It was a case of things at the right place and time. Leah and Board Agent met as a coalition member years ago, but it wasn't love at first sight. Leah didn't find him "that cute," but they clicked as friends almost immediately. They'd share jokes as well as conversations about serious subjects regularly.

Board confided in Leah one day and asked her about what gifts women preferred. She assumed that he was going to court a friend, but to her surprise, he bought presents for her, after all.

"I was shocked," Leah recounts. "He gave me white roses and white chocolates, my favorites!"

It took time, but she eventually realized that she was "happily in love" with Board. "Four months into their relationship, I knew that he was the one for me," she says. Their bond has grown stronger through the years, and they are cherishing their time with each other even more.

"Our relationship is stronger because of our mutual respect. We know each other well now; we can really recognize each other's shortcomings. We work out problems out by talking about them. And we really enjoy our time together, even when we're just killing time at the mall. As couple, we also love trying out different dishes and unwinding through videoke! Most importantly, before going to sleep, we talk about our day. Sometimes, we'd reminisce and laugh about stuff that happened in the past."

Leah admit that she always thinks of their first kiss. "First kiss... oh God! I'm really blessed to have someone like Board. Now I know that one of my dreams really came true! I want to tell the world how happy I am with him."

Martial arts lovin'

For music label executive Katherine Choy, joining the dancing group Fight Club Ice Ocho was a good way to lose weight and get fit. She also wanted to learn more about mixed martial arts, which included judo, grappling and muay Thai.

Her child's expert, however, that it would be when she'd meet her current beau, Vin Bolivar, an advanced mixed arts practitioner who helped train her during the meetings.

It wasn't an instant connection. But they were comfortable with each other so the guys and off, and soon left do turn to end of this.

We once asked the number of a common friend. We messaged each other online and he got my number, too. The friendship grew quickly. We texted each other every day, even to our periodic stories. It's like we don't need to say anything, we just understand someone's tone we feel and what we want to say," Katherine says.

Initially, Katherine found it a little "weird" when Vin first asked her out. But she didn't mind because they grew much from the same interests and celebrate activities. She learned to love his favorite chocolate bar, too.

The point came when Vin asked her if she was interested in turning their friendship into something serious. She thought about it, and halfway into a romantic comedy, they were watching, Katherine happily said "yes."

The new couple finds swimming and jogging together enjoyable. They even like eating pare, too, which is a plus. And they have a unique way of working out their tiffs.

"It's great that we love mixed martial arts. It's useful when we have arguments: we work out our issues by wrestling," she shares, laughing. "But we solve our problems and never resort to such other again. We just needed to understand each other better."

They recently took a snapshot of themselves kissing. "This is so surreal. We'll still see different things, like my future wife and his partner, and then he'd kiss me. We just had to take a picture of it!"

These three real couples and two weeks Melvin and Miss Galatea all win a diamond-studded necklace each from Chordy Crystal Fiesta and free invites to the 2008 Lovapalooza Food fest. Winners will be contacted by Angelou de Leon of Rostrum to be crafted in their anniversary at the coolest Valentine event.

"I WANT to tell the world how happy I am with Ronnie" —Leah Agnes

"WE'LL see more of the world together"—Kirstine Lopez and Cedric Tolosa

"WE WORK issues out by wrestling"—Katherine Choy and Vin Bolivar

FASHION FREAKS

Eco-friendly jewelry

Picar can be recycled into fine jewelry

By Ruby De Vera
Contributor

MUCH HAS BEEN said about the wonders of recycling, and clichés such as "one man's trash is another's treasure" have never proven truer than in this era of the eco-bags, eco-caps, biodegradable soaps and detergents, and other products that are environmentally friendly and made from recycled materials.

The latest environmentally conscious product may be Paper Beans, a line of unique jewelry made from recycled paper bags, shoeboxes, posters, chocolate boxes, gift wrappers and magazines.

Belle Salangsang got the idea when in the midst of spring cleaning, she noticed how colorful the paper bags are. At the same time, a paper-curing technology was being taught at their local church. She put two and two together, and started to get creative.

At first Belle only made jewelry for her personal use and as gifts to family and friends. The jewelry got such rave reviews that the same people she gave them to offered to buy their own.

As her college reunion, she and six other classmates decided to finally market the products on the public as a small business venture. In the process they put their Entrepreneurship and Business Management courses from St. Paul College Quezon City in good use.

Thus, Paper Beans was born.

Livelihood

As a bonus, Paper Beans is providing livelihood to five people, who cut and roll the paper before curing so that the best quality beads are produced, as much as possible taking care that nothing goes to waste. The owners are responsible for the creative making and matching of the paper beans with other accents to form really unique and fashionable pieces.

There are no two identical designs produced, because it all depends on the color of the materials being used. An advice to the buyer: if you see something you like, grab it now because chances are you'll never see it again.

Currently they produce necklaces, belts, bracelets, earrings, cellphone and bag charms, key chains, rosary and rosary bracelets. And if you get lucky, you might come across very rare rings.

Prices are very affordable—ours range from P50 to P600, and individual items are from P50 to P350.

Not only will you help preserve Mother Earth with your every purchase of Paper Beans, buyers who give back paper bags or shoeboxes get a rebate, and when your ordered item (wrapped in a handmade paper box) is personally delivered, you can also take a look at the other items they have on sale.

Wanna learn more about Paper Beans and have a look at the available items ever so [illegible]. They're perfect for your loved ones this Valentine's Day.

KEY chain, P75

BLACK and cream bracelet, P300

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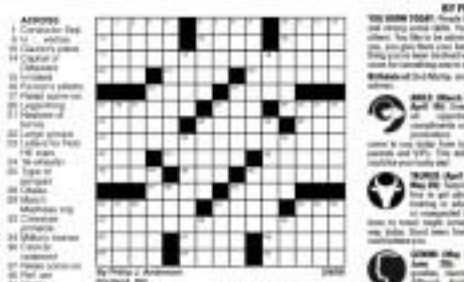

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

Concepts Sudoku By Dave Owen

	7	5	3	8	9			
	8		2			6		
9				1			5	
8				5			6	
2	5	6	1	9			7	
	4	1	7				2	
							9	
							4	
				4	6	1	8	2

Difficulty Level ★★★

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2	6	4	8	9	7	1	3	5
9	7	1	3	4	5	8	2	6
1	9	6	5	8	3	4	7	2
4	3	2	7	1	9	5	6	8
8	5	7	6	2	4	9	1	3
3	1	8	4	5	6	2	9	7
6	2	9	1	7	8	3	5	4
7	4	5	9	3	2	6	8	1

BANJO Albano and Sarah Meier-Albano

MIKE Cortes

MARI Miranda

Their true colors

B-Filipinos celebrate Nike Dunk in their own unique ways

FROM SKATEboarding to ceramic, from the hard court to the hip-hop scene, the Nike Dunks includes representatives of today's diverse lifestyles.

Originally designed back in '85 for college basketball teams, the Nike Dunks allowed ballers to pound the hard court and at the same time flash school pride with personalized team colors.

This 2008, Nike is reasserting the Dunk. Inspired by the original colorways, Nike goes back to basics while maintaining the unique styles that allow individuals to express their uniqueness. The new styles are represented by eight celebrities.

Marc Abaya

To say that Marc Abaya's life is colorful is an understatement. Like Nike Dunks, Marc's world is indeed a whole slew of interesting hues.

A former MTV VJ, the lead singer of the band Xjhwan is intoed in the recording industry for his flamboyancy, in-your-face performances onle.

But Marc claims he's just an average guy. He said he expresses himself both in his music and his Nike Dunks.

Sarah Meier

Fashion model and radio jock, Sarah Meier-Albano is a Swa fanboy at heart. In fact, it was to New York that Sarah first fell in love with Dunks.

"They were the Mark gray Dunk High, she only pair left on the women's section," she said. "I remember finding them at the mall's bottom right corner. They were on sale, and just the pair I was looking for. They are now officially my most wear top, but trusted, pair. I still rock them to death."

Meier said Nike Dunk is an extension of her personality. "The Nike Dunk has evolved to: to this hybrid of a basketball, fashion, and street culture shoe," she said. "Given that those are the three things I'm most passionate about, how could I go wrong?"

Banjo Albano

Banjo Albano also grew up in New York, where he sought refuge in Nike Dunks during the basketball season.

"I would always get a brand new pair right before the basketball season locked off," he said. "In high school and college, I got hooked with 'court sneakers every season. My collection grew to 1 pair older. The paychecks I got from working in basketball camps as well as from other jobs went straight to the Banjo Albano Sneaker Fund."

Banjo points to the Nike Dunk High Wu-Tang as his favorite because it reflects his heritage.

"It's perfect. The Michigan colorway with the Wu-Tang logo is so simple, that's why I love it so much. Coming from Staten Island, my admiration for Nike and the Wu-Tang Clan had a big influence on my opinion."

Raymund Macaspac

Leading rock musician Raymund Macaspac strikes a bold note in the importance of his sandwich band—he combines award-pleasing divine and avant garde music and oozing loins through every performance are his Nike Dunks, which reflects his eclectic personal style and his artistic personality.

Mong Alcaraz

For Sandwich guitarist and skater boy, Mong Alcaraz, Nike Dunks first struck a chord in him in 2006. Since he owns over 20 pairs of Dunks.

"The Nike SB Dunk heavily influenced the skating culture," he explained. "It has the technology that improved the grooming a performance for skaters, so everyone who's ever been in the skateboarding scene knows about the Nike SB Dunk."

"But apart from its functionality what I like about the Dunks are the unique paired designs. They are all latest dunk style, whether it be high or low one but what distinguish each Nike Dunk are the paired designs. Such interesting pairs is turned on me the ultimate sneakerhead."

Mong's most treasured Nike Dunks is the Jordan 1, popularized by the basketball legend himself. Mong has set his sight on what he considers the "Holy Grail" of the Nike Dunks—the Supreme Nike Dunks.

"The Nike Dunks are extensions of a skateboarder's and a musician's personality. There's always a design that expresses their characters. It's like wearing their souls through the soles," said Mong.

Mari Miranda

Owning over 300 pairs of shoes, 15 of which are Nike Dunks, inimitable master DJ Mary Miranda is the ultimate collector. His entire collection spans seven years of gathering, ranging Nike Dunks from all over the world. "It was like treasure hunting," Mars said of his "addiction."

His most prized Dunks are the Nike Undefeated 'Highs, which he bought in the US.

Jay Washington

Growing up in the US, PBA top pick Jay Washington has been collecting Nike Dunks ever since he was in high school. Storing more than 12 pairs, his unique collection consists of sneakers of different hues. To him, the more colorful the Nike Dunks, the better.

What he style loves about the Dunks were the easy colorways Nike collaborated with different artists, giving the sneakers a unique, one-of-a-kind design. "They're the best Nike sneakers for me," he said. "I like the way they're made, the design and most specially, the colors. They come in the most shades that reflect my personality."

Interestingly, Jay's favorite pair is the Nike (French) Sabrina Dunks which he got in New York. Fortunately prize tag of $120, its value is now placed at $600. "Like any other collection, the Nike Dunks' value increases through the years," he said.

Mike Cortes

Two-time all-league selection in Cannon High School in California and top PBA draft pick in 2003, Mike Cortes keeps his roof off the hard court with the Nike Dunk.

According to him, what he likes most about the Dunk is that it comes in a myriad of colors, and they're very comfortable! These sneakers are very laid back, just like me."

His favorite urban wear, the Dunk, is in line with Mike's chic and stylish handsome image—comfortable for everyday wear yet stylish for off-court. "A fusion of Filipino and American design elements to represent my Fil-Am heritage," he explained. Now that's my tag wear.

MARC Abaya

JAY Washington

MONG Alcaraz and Raymund Macaspac

Hi-tech footwear

RIDER FOOTWEAR products are lighter and thinner. They are sporty and casual in reflected in the vibrant colors. Rider can be worn during walks on the beach, during leisure activities, on strolls with friends or simply going out in early evening.

The women's line features classic and simple models. They have geometrical floral designs.

The men's models feature thinner and lighter soles. They have simple inspirations from casual sports. They have adjustable straps with Velcro and high-grip insoles. They feature cushioning and ventilation systems.

Rider sandals are manufactured by Grendene S.A. established in 1971. Grendene is a leader in the Brazilian market and is also one of the world's largest footwear manufacturers. The products are exported to more than 85 countries in five continents.

Grendene has developed its exclusive technology in the production of PVC-based shoes (Vynil Polychloride) and EVA (Ethylene Vinyl Acetate), also known as injected thermoplastics.

Visit Rider outlets located at Sports Central (SM Manila, SM Megamall, SM Centerpoint, SM Mall of Asia), Athlete's Foot (Alabang Town Center, Glorietta, Galleria, Trinoma, Sta. Lucia), Planet Sports (Trilliana, Power Plant Rockwell), Olympic Village (Trilliana, Alabang Town Center, Galleria, Sta. Lucia, Megahumpty (Bonifacio High Street).

RIDER FOOTWEAR products are sporty and casual.

Prom etiquette 101

Here are eight simple rules on getting your act together for the big night.

By Angela V. Ignacio
INQ7 Correspondent

HOORAY, IT'S PROM SEASON once again! It's easy to see why prom night is the one thing high-schoolers look forward to the most—getting all dolled up, having the time of their lives with friends, leaving all those cares and worries at the door sounds fun to my time.

Unfortunately, a lot of kids sometimes leave their manners behind as well, which leads to one from pre-date to post-date. So to make things run a little more smoothly, here's a crash course in some of the most common prom do's and don'ts, charm school-style (and no, it doesn't involve balancing a heavy book on your head).

Don't delay. Prom date hunting—who could be more exciting than that? By this time you should have a date already, but for the sake of the new batch, it's advisable to find a date as early as the start of the school year for two reasons: one, there's a big database to choose from; two, you'll give both of you plenty of time to prepare.

Once you've been invited to someone's prom, your answer should be as straightforward and prompt as possible.

If you're not sure you can go (or, to be honest with your own feelings, if you want to go at all), have the courtesy to say no and don't keep them hanging.

Dazed and drummed? Don't be pissed. Your crush turned you down, huh? Read this carefully: It's not the end of the world. Just as they had the grace to tell you themselves, be a sport and take it in stride, no matter what their reasons may be. Stubbing or badmouthing them will only make you look bitter. Instead, ask someone else (whom company) you're sure to enjoy, like your best friend or a close cousin, or just go stag and have fun with your other dateless buds.

Dress to impress, but without the stress. Naturally, everyone wants to look like a million bucks. The problem is, not all stunning gowns or suits are actually comfortable enough to move in. **Trust us, ill-fitting clothes are the last** that prom night stress we need.

When trying on dresses, always test them: "sashay" beside by breaking even, sitting down, walking (or heels or jumping a little. If you don't trip and the gown doesn't rip or reveal boobies or body parts, then you're all set. It'll save you from living any those horror stories we've all heard so much about.

Don't keep your date waiting. Being fashionably late isn't worth it when you come off as unfashionably rude. Make it common courtesy, but time really is gold, especially for the person whom parents spent a lot for this one night. After all, you owe it to them to at least show up in time for the prom.

If you've agreed to a certain time, make sure you're ready by then. Prepare everything you need the day before, including boutonnieres or corsage, so you won't have to panic over last-minute details on the day itself.

Talk, don't text. It's tormenting enough that people tend to treat cell phones like extra appendages, even more so when they use them relentlessly during social gatherings. Even if your date's not much of a talker, it doesn't mean you should let him or her waste time-space for the rest of the night while you're busy composing notes via SMS with your friends. The prom date epidemic can wait. This is the perfect chance to get to know your date better; we don't want to it.

Don't bump and slurp. In a formal function, you are here to eat. Table manners reflect the kind of upbringing you've had, so it's good to keep in mind some basic dining rules.

Don't know which fork to use? The safest bet is to start with the outermost utensil. When eating soup, always spoon it away from you, then lightly lift your hand to the same direction to get the last few spoonfuls. Sip, don't slurp. Keep your elbows off the table, and cover your mouth when you burp. Never put your napkin down on the table unless you've finished the meal.

Also, it's okay to finish your food. (Oddly enough, most girls eat very little, if at all, for fear that their date might think less of them. Unless you want them to think you're unsweet or just wanting your parents' money, try to enjoy the scrumptious meal served before you.

Take the chance and ask them to dance. So you've got two left feet. Big deal, like most people, the dance part of the evening is where the magic happens; it wouldn't be fair to deprive your date of the chance to let loose on the dance floor, especially if he or she is already gravitating to the music. If both of you would rather sit this one out, then at least ask your date if he or she's up for some slow dancing later on. At the very least, all you have to do is sway and cheek to your love.

Chivalry's not dead! Prove it. This goes both ways. Whether you're confident or shy, a little consideration goes very wouldn't hurt. Guys, you know the drill—complement her on the way she looks (and mean it!), open the door for her, offer your arm for support while walking, help her with her seat, offer your coat when she gets chilly.

For the ladies, introduce your dates to your parents and friends properly. Never fix your makeup, undergarments or hair in public; that's what restrooms are for. When he asks you to dance, try to accept. It's never-ending enough for him to do that, and rejecting him would just shatter the poor guy's confidence.

Lastly, don't forget to thank each other for an awesome time, whether it's a romantic fairytale come true or just a really fun night with a good friend. Who knows? Maybe the magic of the night last a little longer than that. Enjoy!

ALEXIS: The Jewel in the Metro

[illegible] is a better way to actually consider Paris and its single sparkling and time-dance is to visit any of the ALEXIS stores in town and check out its huge inventory of fine jewelry and watches at incredible prices.

ALEXIS, one of the subsidiaries of [illegible], was founded in 1978 and, since then, has been steadily known as the premiere jewelry and jewelry outlet that offers a wide array of items to suit any budget or occasion. It has a global network and is one of the few authorized dealers of world-renowned brands like Tag Heuer, Movado, Citizen, Seiko, Casio, Omega, Longines, Tissot, Rado, Hamilton, Certina, Mido, Swatch, Orient, Bulova, Fossil, Diesel, Guess, Nautica, Skechers, Puma, Adidas, Roots, Converse, Lacoste, Timex, Swarovski, Pierre Cardin, Bench, Guess Collection, Guess Watches, Guess Jewelry, Guess Accessories, Guess Eyewear, Guess Fragrances, Guess Bags, Guess Shoes, Guess Clothing, Guess Underwear, Guess Swimwear, Guess Sunglasses

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bonnie S. Velarde

IZA CALZADO

Award and 2 shows for Iza

By Reynold Sun Diego Jr.

IZA CALZADO IS SHOWING OFF A SMALL scratch on her chin, which she got on the set of GMA-7's teen nighttime series, Cielo 3: Capuso't Tunguin Bwakahin."

"I didn't even notice it until the morning after," she says.

The gash didn't come from an action scene, she explains. "It was probably from the heavy dresses worn I did with Dondong (actor Dondon Pacilio)."

"Bwakahin" stars previous 2 members of Challenges for Iza.

(MORE) E2

Pinoy animation films in local cinemas soon

By Marinel R. Cruz

LOCAL INDIE FILMMAKERS ARE NOT THE only ones working double time these days.

Filipino animators, many of whom have been employed by the Disney, Cartoon Network and Warner studios for the last 20 years, are producing full-length animated films.

Two of these movies will be screened this year in local cinemas, Imperium Entertainment learned.

Star-studded voice cast

Both productions counterintuitive major names to lend their voices for the lead parts.

"Urduja," produced by Tony Tarnate's APT Entertainment, has a star-studded voice cast. Regine Velasquez stars as Princess Urduja. Gretchen Barretto as her lover Lim Ah-ng; Johnny Delgado as Wang; Eddie Garcia as Lakanpatot; Albert B as "Datu"; and Michael V as Bisaklak.

"Dayo," by Gerry Edge Productions Inc., features the voices of child stars Sarah Agassi as Bulaya and Katrina "Kopie" Legaspi as Anya. Manueyangyel Bonjac Gallaga is the voice behind the character Bisaya. Michael V is Bisaklak, Johnny Delgado is Anya's father and Lorrie Gaullen plays a shrimp.

"Those are ambitious projects," said Antonio Aboal Jr., "Dayo" supervising producer. "We hope to assist the design of Pinoy animation so more subcontractors of big animation companies. We want the world to know that we are also capable of producing our very own productions."

"Urduja" tells the story of the legendary warrior princess and ruler of the Kingdom of Tawalisi in Pangasinan from 1350 to 1400. Urduja was famous for leading a group of women warriors, called Binalabalan or Amazons, who were skilled fighters and equestrians. These women, history developed a single art of archery, though Philippine male warriors to protect their land from invaders.

The lone theater run of "Urduja" is tentatively set middle of the year.

"Dayo" follows the adventures of 11-year-old Bulaya as he tries to save his grandparents who have been abducted and brought to Alimanukan, a mysterious and magical land that is home to popular creatures of Philippine mythology.

Target: MMFF

The makers of "Dayo" plan to have it entered in the 2008 Metro Manila Film Festival in December.

(MORE) E2

Dingdong must clear issue with Rufa Mae

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

RUFA MAE "SUCH" Quinto had no intention of rocking the boat when she gave a blow-by-blow account of her failed romance with Dingdong Dantes during an entertainment magazine.

But her confessions didn't sit too well with Dingdong's wife, Jessa Zaragoza, who hosted on TV. "Please stop saying SIP si Pilar at Dingdong. They were just dating. Admit ya days of Dingdong with another man. Dito ang gaw of Dingdong as Kenjie. We don't owe her an apology."

Pilar is standing by her story. "Hindko na nila sabi dun si someone ang tsak ko. Ah no to ya anyang na sabay pa nila yun. I'll just pray for Dingdong and Jessa. Wag na nating ruling ang sarili nila at nanotin na lahat ako ang nagsabi ang lahat ito. At saka na lang ito. Mga ilang months ang nagsasabihan. The story of my life is my story. Di ko pwede ilagalan yun to please them. I have the right to share my story like real-good na naman. Considered Jessa a friend but if she says na wala akong ito at ito, its for the actor problem ako dunno. Dingdong caught me with, find na yun. He's just trying to save face that's why lang ata ako ang binabato sa akin."

It's been eight years since Niki and Dingdong parted ways. They seemed to have healed the hatchet when Jessa and Dingdong were interviewed by Pilar in "Showbiz Central" last July. But now old wounds have been opened.

Dingdong seem be soon enough to speak up and clear the issue once and for all. When a relationship ends, bitterness feelings shouldn't be buried other, they will only bottle that way.

Endorser ought to be consistent from start to finish. Who needs an ex-no ones-loved baggage?

Say 'yes'

Sam Milby hopes Anne Curtis will finally say "yes" to him on Valentine's Day. They had a little misunderstanding but everything's going smoothly now. "I wish I could take Anne on a date but I'll be working on Valentine's day," he sighs.

Not enough time but always enough love...right, Sam?

Aspiring judge

Ogie Alcasid is looking forward to being a judge in "Pinoy Idol." His personal criteria in picking the winner is for one to be an inspirational generation of Filipinos.

As for his competitors, Regine Velasquez, Ogie hasn't decided what to say but for Velasquez's fans, "She appreciates cards and little things," he says. "But knowing me, I will spoil her especially on Valentine's Day."

How Sen Regine changed his definition of love? "She made me see that love itself just means emotion. It's a commitment." Not to convert the comic valentines again in the name of love?

Quite cold

According to a reader, Justice Kim Chai and Gerald Anderson were quite cold to each other during a taping recently. "Before magi-roll ang camera, they were not talking to each other. After the usual pleasantries, you could sense tension between them. Could it be because of Empress Shuck which being linked to Gerald?

Daging, Cupid! Bisexual love emergence!

Bautista's fashion sense

Erwin, in contrast to most who front appeal to accessories, is the basketful of youth fashion brand Bench pero and iconic red Bamboo.

On stage or sets, erin, the "b-side" of tito Romeo, the subdued hair, while the B-side contains the more expressive rough reflecting the artist's character.

In similar fashion, the B-side Collection accesses the side of Bamboo rarely revealed to the public. Their personal fashion statement.

RUFA Mae Quinto

'Kung Fu Kids'

The cast of ABS-CBN's "Kung Fu Kids" (weekdays after TV Patrol) will take to the skies to Cinema One. The celebration tomorrow. They will be giving away their fine of toys and merchandise such as notebooks, stationeries and pencil cases.

The show revolves around the adventures of Leander (Jaimee Aguilar), a sickly boy who wants to learn kung fu to defend his sister and himself from bullies.

Meanwhile, it's time for Kung Hei Kung Fa Pat Choi.

E-mail scoop to balachong@yahoo.com.

Love Month Movie Special!

Sexy Jessica Alba looks for true love in 'Good Luck Chuck'

PEOPLE Sexiest Woman in the World, Jessica Alba of FANTASTIC 4, stars as Cam, a hunky, gentle and hopelessly clumsy penguin specialist in search of true love in the hot new feel-good romantic comedy.

Enter Chuck (Dane Cook), cursed to help women find their true love with the next guy they sleep with. After playing the field, Chuck realizes Cam is the girl of his dreams. Now, he has to break his heart before she can win hers.

Strong assurance to the Sexiest Date Movie Ever!

Rated: Adults Only due to nudity and sexual content
Showing on selected theatres only, due to R-18 rating

NOW SHOWING

Greenbelt Cinemas
EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE

GEORGE LUCAS' CHUCK	BUCKET LIST	MY BROTHER'S WAR	CLOVERFIELD
7:30	12:00	12:00	12:00
9:45	2:30	2:30	2:30
12:00	5:00	5:00	5:00
2:15	7:30	7:30	7:30
4:30	10:00	10:00	10:00
6:45			
9:00			

THE EYE	THE MIST	CLOVERFIELD	P.S. I LOVE YOU	MY BROTHER'S
12:00	12:00	12:00	12:00	12:30
2:30	2:30	2:30	2:30	3:00
5:00	5:00	5:00	5:00	5:30
7:30	7:30	7:30	7:30	8:00
10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:30

BIG SHOWS AT THE BIG DOME

OL 4 LOVE
February 13 | Wednesday | 8pm
Erik Santos, Sarah Geronimo, Christian Bautista & Rochelle Ann Go

ARANETA CENTER EVENTS

GRAND CLEARANCE SALE
70% OFF GREAT SELECTIONS CENTERWIDE NOW UNTIL FEB 15

THE PERFECT MATCH THIS VALENTINE SEASON!

RICHARD Gutierrez MARIAN Rivera

My Bestfriend's Girlfriend

Love comes in unexpected packages

Directed by Mark A. Reyes II, DOP

OPENS IN THEATERS FEB. 13

Pinoy animation . . .

From page F1

"Bridget" and "Enjoy" are only the second and third locally produced full-length animated movies.

An animated version of "Bong Adkinan," co-produced by PLT Films and Guiding Light Productions, was shelved in 1997. It was the brainchild of animator Gerardo Garcia, winner of the 1998 Star award for Best Short Film.

In 2002, local production of the Top Dog movie-to-animation TV series, "Bahala Batyal," a talking-animal show for children.

Abad, who co-wrote "Enjoy" with Eric Caballes, said work on the film began as early as October 2005, about the time Carmy Edge Productions started investing in digital animation.

Carmy Edge is a 4-year-old post-production company specializing in TV commercials and station-related presentations. Its owner, Jessie Carmen, is a musical director of several TV series and films.

"Bahala Batyal" is done in the traditional animation process "hand-drawn, Enjoy" is all-digital, which is a combination of 2D and 3D technologies," explained Abad. "We are hoping to get Jon Inocencio to record the movie's theme song with a Bicolano orchestra. The will be a first in Philippine movies."

Award . . .

From page F1

Breakdown scenes

"It's packing me in the butt," she writes. "Almost every taping day, I have a breakdown scene. My poor clients with breakdown scenes are in front of the mirror."

As if "Bestfriends" wasn't taxing enough, he is also set to begin a new weekly documentary/biology entitled "ESP."

Wilma Galvante, GMA 7 senior vice president for Entertainment TV, confirm ed to Pilipino Star Ngayon that Ms. Galvante chooses "Medium" (with Patricia Arquette) and "Ghost Whisperer" (with Jennifer Love Hewitt).

"I play a comics-loving journalist who discovers she has a limited ESP after surviving a near-death experience," Iya reports. "She starts using her psychic powers to help quite exclusively."

Although her third solo gig clearly, she seems herself lucky that she's never jug ging two TV shows.

Another blessing

Iya another blessing was winning the Model Star trophy at the Asia Model Awards held in Seoul, Korea, on Jan. 10.

It was totally unexpected. "To start with, Korea's a new turf," the say ing goes.

She hopes that the Koreans will open more doors, not only for her but for other Filipino artists as well.

Singer-songwriter Freddie Aguilar received the Asia Star Award. Bobby Mercado of the Professional Models Association of the Philippines (PMAP) won the Male Star Model trophy, and Mel Hermosa of GMA Artist Center (GMAAC), the female equivalent. Called Bae Bae Georgia crowned.

Dubbed as the "Oscars of the fashion industry," the event was organized by the Korean Modeling Association Co. (KMA) and was covered by over 400 print and broadcast media outlets.

The Filipinos joined delegates from Europe, Japan, China, the USA and Indonesia.

"It was a big event," Iya recounts. "There were paparazzi asking me pictures of the time."

Andy Ilao, the Korean national who joined up GMAAC with SMA, says he's impressed with her and the PMAP model.

"There are a lot of opportunities for Filipinos in Korea. A lot of the countries still remember Freddie Aguilar's hook."

AT THE CINEMAS

ELIMINATION 1	1		2	CLOVERFIELD	3		4
ELIMINATION 4	1		2		3	GOOD LUCK CHUCK	
GREENBELT 1	1	BUCKET LIST			2	GOOD LUCK CHUCK	
GREENBELT 2	1	GOOD LUCK CHUCK			2	BUCKET LIST	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1		2		3		4
ATALA CENTER CUBE	1		2		3		4
MARKET! MARKET!	1	GOOD LUCK CHUCK			2		
TRINOMA	1		2		3		4

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Alabang Town Center — Asian Lunar New Year Celebration, February 7 – Concerts in Park

Greenbelt — Greenbelt 3 Dream Theatre Presents: BROADWAY SHOWSTOPPERS, Feb. 11,12 & 13, 8pm – Greenbelt 3 Park

Alabang Town Center — Chinese New Year Dragon Dance, February 7, 11am to 2pm

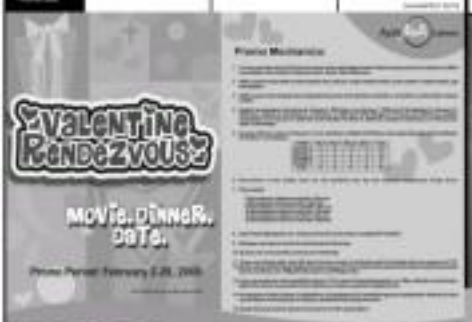
Atala Center Cube — Juke Fordham Live, February 13 @ 10:30pm, South Surface Parking area

Market! Market! — Marine Beach Volleyball Mini Test, February 23, Activity Center

Christagallis — Repertory Philippines presents HAIR!!!, February 2 to 17, 8PM. For reservations, pls. call 687-0179 or visit www.repertory-philippines.com

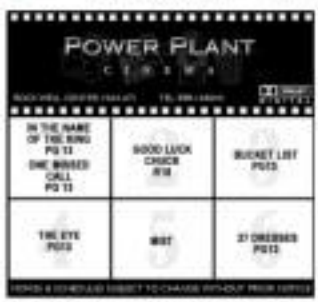
Ayala Museum — Masters of Philippine Art, Paintings by Juan Luna, Fernando Amorsolo, and Fernando Zobel. For more info, pls. call 757-7117 ext 211 loc. 10 or email museum_inquiries@ayalamuseum.org

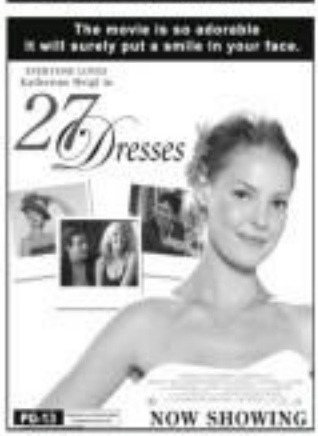
Tri Noma — Generation of Visions featuring Jed Madela, February 9, 4pm, Activity Center; Juke Fordham Live, February 9, 7pm, Activity Center



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2008
F3

R-13
SAW IV
NOW SHOWING


POWER PLANT
CINEMA
IN THE NAME OF THE KING
PG 13
ONE MISSED CALL
PG 13
GOOD LUCK CHUCK
R18
BUCKET LIST
PG13
THE EYE
PG13
MIST
27 DRESSES
PG13


The movie is so adorable
It will surely put a smile in your face.
27 Dresses
PG-13
NOW SHOWING

MTRCB
R-13
ALIENS vs PREDATOR 2
NOW SHOWING

GREENHILLS CINEMAS
THEATRE-MALL
PROMENADE
NOW SHOWING

bloomfields
Sandyhills
Feb. 6, 2008
Eastwood Central Plaza
Free Admission
EASTWOOD CINEMAS
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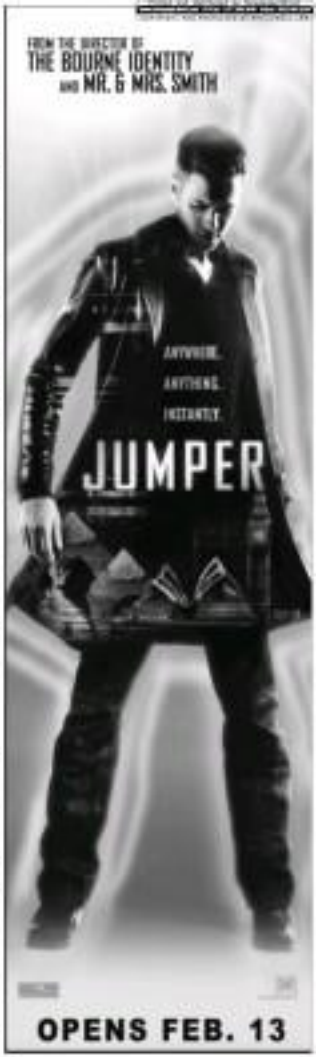
GUARANTEED SEATS

SHANG
CINEPLEX
Bucket List
Good Luck Chuck
P.S. I Love You
Cloverfield
27 Dresses
Alvin & the Chipmunks
Shang Cineplex
E-saw Club

NOW SHOWING
WHAT WILL IT SOUND LIKE WHEN YOU DIE?
ONE MISSED CALL


FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
THE BOURNE IDENTITY
and MR. & MRS. SMITH
ANYWHERE.
ANYTHING.
INSTANTLY
JUMPER
OPENS FEB. 13

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING
CINEPLEX
CINEMA
CASH AND CARRY
cinema

Choose Your Valentine Show

EVERY YEAR, INQUIRER ENTERTAINMENT HELPS readers pick the best shows for that special date, by asking the concert artists what they have in store for audiences. This is part 4 of the 2008 series.

Joey Albert, Eugene Villaluz, Louie Reyes, Ding Mercado
"Love Memoirs," Feb. 13 and 14, Captain's Bar, Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Makati. Call 750-8888 or 891-0826.

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's?

Eugene Villaluz: Usually dinner with a loved one, perhaps watch a concert show of an artist that I admire. If I don't have a date, then it will be a night out with close friends, just chilling out.

Joey Albert: I haven't had a year without a valentine's concert. Luckily most of them are not held on the day itself. This year is going to be the second time away from home.

Since I was a little girl, every Valentine's morning we would wake up to a wonderful breakfast table covered with a red tablecloth, red heart-shaped cookies and gifts for each member of the family. My mom started the tradition. When I got married, I continued it in my own home in Canada. This year, I will be away so my eldest daughter will prepare the Valentine breakfast.

What's your most romantic Valentine's Day story?

Eugene: Many Valentine's Day spent with someone I truly love.

Joey: I would say 1976, when my crazy first "boyfriend" took me on my very first date and proposed to me.

What's an ideal Valentine date?

Eugene: Someone you can feel really comfortable with and who enjoys the same things you like to do. Someone who does not expect too much. Usually people are extra sensitive on special occasions such as birthdays and Valentine's. They expect you to be more loving, more caring. Actually, you should treat each other in the same loving way every day.

Joey: Watching the sunset, spending a quiet evening by the sea. Sigh.

Who's your fantasy date?

Eugene: Nobody in particular.

Joey: Barack Obama. I have to whisper, to spoil my vote.

EUGENE Villaluz

What's the most romantic love song?

Eugene: For me, it's "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life" by Legrand/Bergman. Just listen to the version of Barbra Streisand or Jack Jones of this song. Michael Bolton did it in a new version. The lyrics are so beautiful and captures the essence of what a lasting love affair should really be. It reads, with, "... till I ever will recall of my life, it all of my life, with you..."

Joey: That's a hard one. I would have to go with an old standard like "Someone To Watch Over Me" or "The Way You Look Tonight." Have you "Face of a Stalk" from the movie, "Human Has It"? Sincerely, at times I like those cool Brazilian love songs too... "Look of Love" and "Like a Lover." Hey mike... too many!! So OPM dami rin! I love songs like "Sana Bukas na Siga" or "Isa Pang Sabi Lang Mo."

If you were not doing a show, who would you watch?

Eugene: Being artists I've worked with before, like Sarah Geronimo and Rachel ann Go at the Araneta Coliseum. I produced them albums when they were just starting out, and now they've blossomed into sensitive and great performers.

Joey: I've always wanted to watch an Johnny Mathis or Tony Bennett.

Why should we watch your show?

Eugene: Oh this is a good question! People who have good music and the beautiful love songs of the '70s and '80s will have them fill in this concert. "Love Memoirs" will be unforgettable soundtrack of the love life of the baby boomers who were, and hopefully are, still out there. Those people who appreciate to feel, remember, Joey Albert, Louie Reyes, Ding Mercado and myself—as artists are assured of a great evening, not big "feel good" concert.

Joey: Because it's Valentine's, and love songs are my specialty, also because I've seldom done and I miss singing for the best audiences in the world... Filipinos!

Jay-R, Kuyle, Kris Lawrence

"Trends in Love," Feb. 13, Tomatino, Promenade, Greenhills. Call (63-2) 6888, 633-9826, 637-7027, 687-6021.

JayR, Kuyle and Kris Lawrence

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's?

Jay-R: I don't guess much. I'm the type who likes to just laid back.

Kuyle: Before, I would usually watch a concert.

Kris Lawrence: Nice romantic dinner with a special someone, good conversation, romance.

What's your most romantic Valentine's Day story?

Jay-R: When I took my girlfriend out on a date and we got lost for an hour and a half.

Kuyle: Last Valentine's after doing a show, Dong [Dingdong Dantes] and I had our own valentine concert. We sang several many songs and laughed a lot. It was so much fun but, before that day, I didn't enjoy valentine's but months later, we opened Gourmet 872.

Kris: Tell my friends to dress up as mayors to serve me and my date, and then put on a show for her.

What's an ideal Valentine date?

Jay-R: Dreamy movie, then shopping.

Kuyle: Actually, I find it a blessing that I'm busy on Valentine's Day because it's hard to request a perfect date. Having it takes the fun out of the date. I find it ideal not to have a date on the day itself because it's easier to enjoy minus all the pressure.

Kris: Just a great time.

What's your fantasy date?

Jay-R: Rebecca Rumpit Marasigan.

Kuyle: I would go for Adam Sandler because I find him so funny. You'd be super fun, laughing the whole day...pairing romantic comedy film.

Kris: Beyonce and JLo together.

What's the most romantic love song?

Jay-R: "Always and Forever."

Kuyle: Any song can be romantic as long as it's you singing to you and looking in your eyes.

Kris: "Back 2 Holiday."

If you were not doing a show, who would you watch?

Jay-R: Gary V.

Kuyle: My mom (Liza Jon Padilla). Valentine's Day is her show because every year she happens to be her 25th. So I'm watching her and she singing with her on 8th, 9, 15, 16 at the Captain's Bar of Mandarin Oriental.

Kris: Chris Brown, Jay-R, Gary V, Maja Salvador.

Why should we watch your show?

Jay-R: It's not just a show with your usual love songs. We have secrets to tell before we break into the songs.

Kuyle: Jay-R, Kris and I have known each other for many years. The first time we worked together was when we recorded "You Make Me Sing." The two of them play their other friend, rapper Jhonny Music, worry and produced that song for me. They're very funny and easy to work with. I think people will enjoy this new combination of singers. And our friendship will be felt, when we perform.

Kris: You'll have a great time. It's rewarding enough. You'd never expect it, coming from us.

MELAINE Marquez and

Opening

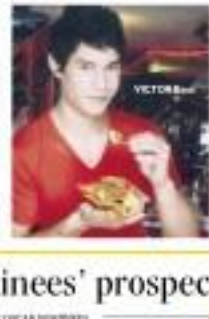
Backstabbing
Stars Marlow, Jay Agustin, Eudy Elizabeth Ortega, Patricia
Directed by Jon Lucas
A college student (Agustin) sees videos of female celebrities, but furtively pines for a dorky (Eudy). To keep his secrets a he directs his parents' tenant (Glover). After months, curious on cable TV, an "insider" gave the series directors make this erotic drama which seven days. Technically in bed zone ballistic.

The Bucket List
Stars Jack Nicholson, M[illegible], Sonora Rooney, Sean [illegible], by Todd
Directed by Rob Reiner
Two cancer patients (Nicholson, Freeman) draft a list of things to do before kicking the bucket. A of sessions (Nicholson) towards pleasure is [illegible] into cinema noir into subtext, and pathos. Can formerly against "Watching [the two] hard to resist." Jesse Baron of Weekly dailies: "It makes Mitch like John Cassavetes."

The Eye
Stars Jessica Alba, Alessa Parker Posey, Gabe Gomez
Directed by David Moreau, Jidaul
Based on Danny and Oxi Pang Bin, this spook-fest casts Alba as concert violinist whose corneal transplant allows her to see people...[illegible] dead. Matthew McConaughey complains of the flick's "scare

Joyce dating someone older, 'but not too old'

RUSHES



Top of the talk shows

Good riddance

Oh star flop

What he eats...

Dishy's wish

Nominees' prospects at the Oscars

The Mist

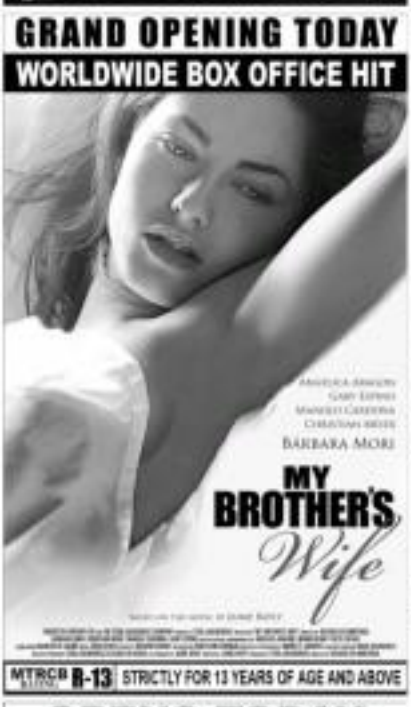
The Darjeeling Limited

My Brother's Wife

Good Luck Chuck

Hot exhibits

Tanghalang Ateneo

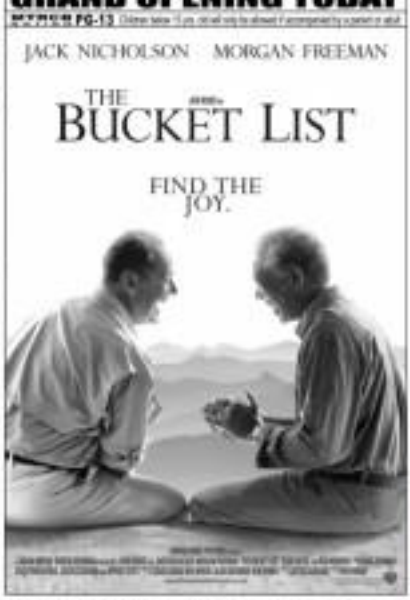


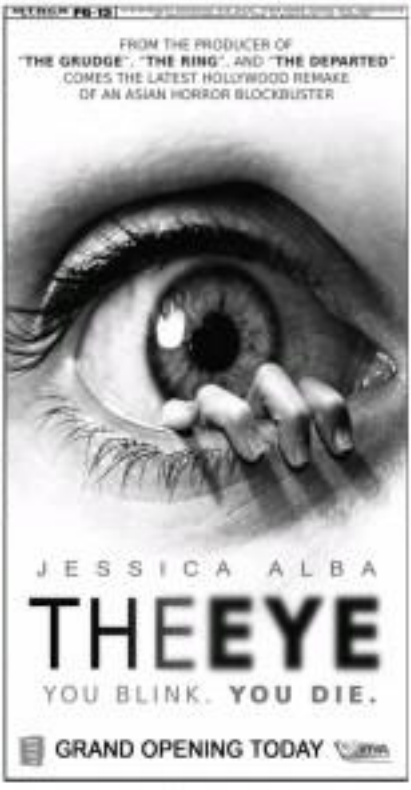
'Kyle XY' new season

NEW EPISODES OF THE hit, cool season of the sci-fi series "Kyle XY" on Wednesdays, 8:30 p.m. on Studio 23.

Kyle (Matt Dallas) returns to his adoptive family a month after going through some upheavals....Stephen Bruce Thomas changes jobs, Nicole (Jennifer Machado) second guesses herself, Lori (April Mattox) deals with her brother, Declan (Chris Olivero) and Josh (Jean-Luc Bilodeau) befriends Angela (Angela Aguanta).

The first season showed how Kyle tried to remember his past and was shunned by his family before learning to become human.





'Survivor: Micronesia'

The reality competition "Survivor: Micronesia" returns this month on CBS with 16 diehard fans of the show getting their skills to replicate 10 fan favorites of the past seasons.

The fans include motivational speaker Brook Jones, firefighter Jeri Anderson and ice cream vendor Erik Schenbeck.

The players who are making a comeback to the game are Yau-Man (Dan Foley), Amanda Kimmel (Oliver) and Jon "Jonny Fairplay" Dalton (Reid Edwards).

The show will have a live satellite telecast on 9th, 8 to 3 p.m., with a prime time outing to 9 p.m. on ETC.

Succeeding episodes on Tuesdays, same schedule.

'Merlin's Apprentice'

The sequel to the

hit 1998 television series "Merlin," "Merlin's Apprentice," premieres this month on the Hallmark Channel.

The series starts exactly in 20 years after the sorcerer left the kingdom. The once impenetrable fortress has lost its power and enchantment, after King Arthur's death.

Its resident healers are taken over by the Knighting, and the villages are nothing more but a landscape of smoldering ash.

The miniseries premieres 8th, 9, 6 p.m., with a replay on Feb. 10, 3 p.m.

'Oprah'

Oprah asks the

question most couples have never considered—"Why did I get married?"—on the Feb. 14 episode of "Oprah," 4 p.m. on Hallmark.

'700 Club Asia'

"The 700 Club Asia" ranges a five-episode entitled "Made, Laying in Strangulation" on Feb. 11 to 15, 11:30 p.m. on Q Channel 11.

Stories on how one can be abundant will be featured.

Brian Kumar hosts

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8:00 a.m. (Manila Time)

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5 SAW IV	10 27 DRESSES

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2 P.S. I LOVE YOU NATIONAL TREASURE 2	6 CLOVERFIELD
3 JOHN RAMBO	7 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
4 IN THE NAME of the KING	8 27 DRESSES

NOVALICHES

1 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2	5 IN THE NAME of the KING
2 SAW IV	6 ONE MISSED CALL
3 CLOVERFIELD	7 27 DRESSES
4 JOHN RAMBO	

PIONEER

1 CLOVERFIELD	5 ONE MISSED CALL | 27 DRESSES
2 IN THE NAME of the KING	4 JOHN RAMBO

STA. ROSA

1 JOHN RAMBO	1 SWEENEY TODD
2 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2	2 THE HEARTBREAK KID
3 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	3 DRAGON WAR
4 THE HEARTBREAK KID	4 SYDNEY WHITE

LIPA

DASMARINAS

1 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2	1 SAW IV
2 27 DRESSES	2 JOHN RAMBO
3 JOHN RAMBO	3 ONE MISSED CALL
4 CLOVERFIELD	4 CLOVERFIELD
	5 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
	6 27 DRESSES

IMUS

ANGELES

1 JOHN RAMBO	1 SWEENEY TODD
2 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN	2 DESPERADOS
3 CLOVERFIELD	3 DEATH PROOF
4 AMERICAN GANGSTER	

TARLAC

STARMILLS

1 DEATH PROOF	4 AMERICAN GANGSTER
2 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN	5 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
3 CLOVERFIELD	6 JOHN RAMBO

BACOLOD

1 AMERICAN GANGSTER	1 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
2 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2	2 SWEENEY TODD
3 SWEENEY TODD	3 JOHN RAMBO
4 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN	4 AMERICAN GANGSTER
5 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	5 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN
6 HOOD of HORROR	6 DRAGON WAR

ILOILO

a film by Jun Lana

Rosanna takes a look at how a seemingly harmless gadget can trigger social change, shape our lives and affect us in this day and age of instant gratification.

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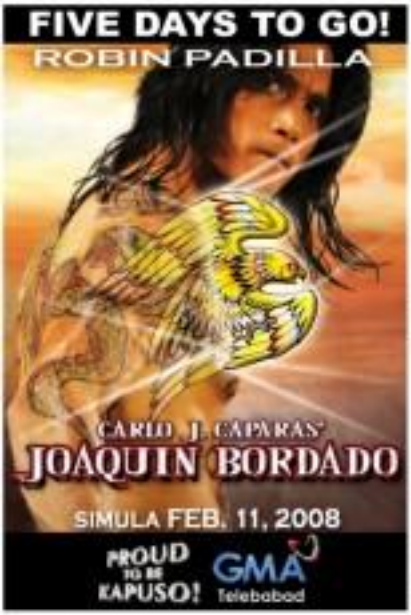
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